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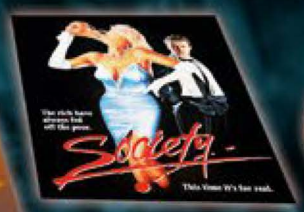

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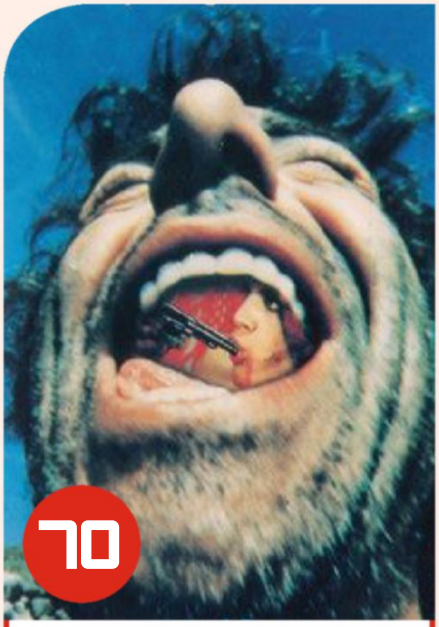

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REGULARS

STARBURST

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to STARBURST Issue 413.

One night in the late '70s I was at a very impressionable age when I was introduced to a movie shown very late one night on BBC 2. I had seen an advert which suggested there might be robots in it, which was certainly enough for me to begin the lobbying process with my Grandma as to the benefits of allowing me to stay up late in order to watch this profoundly important part of my growth into a healthy and positive individual. I had tried to get a late night pass for horror movies but this never flew with her. Happily I had Dez Skinn and his **House Of Hammer** adaptations to scratch that particular itch (she bought those for me without ever realising that they were the equivalent of horror methadone at the time). It was with **Westworld** that I finally got my late night pass, and entry into the theme park of the future. A concept that literally blew my mind at the time.

Obviously when the author of **Westworld** did the same thing all over again with dinosaurs, I literally could not wait to see **Alton Towers** with prehistoric attractions go on the fritz. Now I am going to be in the minority here, but I had a few issues with **Jurassic Park**, and preferred the 'Raise The Titanic' vibe of **The Lost World** with its return to the mothballed workshop that spawned the DNA masterpieces. My problem with **Jurassic Park** was simply that I never got to see this mind blowing theme park in operation. Despite kicking CGI effects to the next level of sheer believability, all we got was a few scientists and a couple of kids legging it from admittedly realistic dinos. I wanted my **Alton Towers** gone wrong, dammit!

Even though the third instalment was directed by one of my favourite directors, Joe Johnston, it was still just a chase around an island. Similar to the movies of my youth, but without the stop motion creature effects. **Westworld** was simply too cool an idea. **Westworld** with dinosaurs was the ultimate goal in my opinion, and when Michael Crichton sadly passed away in 2009 I had pretty much given up on seeing this happen. Yet here I am in 2015, and director Colin Trevorrow seems about to deliver the goods. In the soon to be released **Jurassic World** we have a fully fledged dino theme park. Fully operational, and with an upgraded T-Rex to boot. It doesn't get any better than this!

STARBURST celebrates the evolution of this mighty franchise by looking back at all of the dino movies that came before, and the history of the entire **Jurassic Park** franchise. We also look at the lengthy career of a lengthy man, and celebrate the achievements of Michael Crichton (you need to know that he was actually a dinosaurusly 6'9" tall, or that makes no sense whatsoever!). I am also pleased to say that we have a look at the amazing **Westworld**. In an attempt to convince any younger readers to grab the Blu-ray and see what all the fuss is about!

Whilst dinosaurs obviously rule this issue we also investigate the **Poltergeist** curse, take a look at **Insidious: Chapter 3** and pay a visit to the infamous **Island of Death** - this plus all of your usual favourites waiting to make you feel right at home.

Don't forget that if you want to hang out with me and the rest of the **STARBURST** team then pencil in every Wednesday 9pm until 11pm on **Fab Radio International**, and make **The STARBURST Radio Show** a part of your weekly, geekly activities. You can email or phone in and be a part of the show. If you are busy Wednesdays that is no excuse, you can subscribe for free on iTunes. **STARBURST Radio** needs YOU!

'Til next month,
keep watching the weird and wonderful,

Jordan Royce
EDITOR

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FEEDBACK

You can write to STARBURST via snail mail:
STARBURST MAGAZINE, PO Box 4508, Manchester, M61 0GY
or email: **letters@starburstmagazine.com**

STAR LETTER

DEATH STAR LETTER
Thank the maker! What did we do without the Internet? I have been sat watching the live stream of the STAR WARS Celebration event. It was amazing. If I wasn't already hyped up for the new film, this did the trick! I predict Christmas will be overshadowed by THE FORCE AWAKENS and it will break all records and blow everything else off the screen! What do you think? I bet the STARBURST office is buzzing with excitement. What did you guys think of the fabulous new droid BB-8 being an actual robot rather than a CGI effect?
Robert F, via EMAIL

We were the same, as you can imagine! We were (mostly) blown away by the new trailer – although our illustrious leader might think otherwise (see IT'S ONLY A MOVIE on page 130). We do all agree that the film is going to be something special.

OH GOODY
I wanted to say that I have never read your magazine before this weekend. I do not often buy glossy publications as I find that many manage to talk a lot and say very little in their articles. I was given a copy of STARBURST during *The Birmingham Comics Festival*, as part of the VIP goody bag, and I have to say that I love it. It's so well written and refreshing, it really hits the mark on what I am into. The articles are intelligently written and well researched, I hardly put it down yesterday and I still have a lot more to read through. I simply wanted to pass on a few kind words of appreciation and let you know that you now have an all-new reader.
Tim Dennant, via EMAIL

Nice to have a new convert! If you've gotten through the magazine so speedily and can't wait for your next fix, why not check out the STARBURST podcast!

BRUSSELS SHOUT-OUTS
Started listening to your podcast about a month ago, and caught the STARBURST bug. Sometimes I try other sci-fi shows, but it's never long before I'm scuttling back to STARBURST. Currently on a work-experience placement in Brussels and 2 hours of Fab Radio is now my ideal fantasy escapism. Keep up the good work, you're awesome!
Grace Elizabeth, via EMAIL

I thought people went to other countries to live amongst the native people and absorb the language, all you are gonna come back speaking is gobbledy-geek!

YOU MUST BE JOKING
I thought the photo revealing Jared Leto as The Joker looked hot! Lots of tweeps dis'ed it but I think they just need time to get used to his new look, just like when you get a new haircut! Everyone would complain if they made him look the same as always, it's still recognisably The Joker, but just with a new twist. He looks believable as an unbalanced criminal, he would have to look cool and have a presence to attract an entourage in the first place.
Alice, via EMAIL

You're the first person we've heard say anything good about this! Let me guess, big Leto fan? Sure if he was just some hipster hanging out in a bar, maybe we would think he looked cool (if we were drunk enough), but the problem a lot of people are having with him is that the look doesn't truly match up with his characters fundamental traits.

(DV)DEARLY DEPARTED
Being the cheapskate that I am, I ordered a used boxset from Amazon, thinking I was crafty getting a steal at £3.99 for what would have been £12.99 brand new. I opened the jiffy bag, no mystery stains on the box, good start! Watched disc 1 - what a good show... then opened the box up again to grab disc 2...! WHERE IS IT?!
I know it said 'USED' but it's not like a sandwich! Every other second hand DVD I've ever bought has been fine (and it's most of my collection).
I got a refund and bought another (YES second hand... but from another seller), the dilemma is what am I to do with this incomplete DVD box set? I can't give it to a charity shop, it seems a waste to throw it out, and it's extra junk in my house if I keep it. How often do you lend a boxset to someone and when you get it back they have lost one of your discs? It must happen pretty frequently, so is there a website out there where people can trade/sell lonesome discs and boxsets who need get together?
Fran, via EMAIL

Nevermind Friends Reunited *this* is what the internet was created for surely, well this and pictures of cats of course! It must be a thing already?! Or do people just rely on eBay perhaps? It sounds like a very good idea to us, and if any of our readers know of such a site, or have any incomplete DVD box sets, write in... perhaps we can find someone to complete you!

P.S - if you have any lonesome socks, write in to OH DARN! magazine instead.

Winner: Janet-Rose Christie. Head over to www.starburstmagazine.com to enter this month's caption contest.

THINGS TO COME

A ROUND-UP OF THE BEST (AND WORST) OF THIS MONTH'S MOVIE / TV NEWS

Having terrified us in his re-do of **Maniac**, little Elijah Wood is back to make us smile – albeit in a horrific way – in this fun-looking film co-written by **Insidious**' Leigh Whannell. In **Cooties**, Wood is a substitute teacher who must defend his colleagues when a virus turns the tiny tykes into ravenous savages. Hilarity, no doubt, ensues. No UK date as yet, but the film hits US VOD/DVD on September 18th.

MARVEL

With **Avengers: Age of Ultron** now behind us, all attention is focused on the future of the Marvel Cinematic Universe… and in particular a certain Webhead. It appears that we could be on the cusp of finding out who will be next to play Spider-Man on the big screen. With Spidey to make his debut in **Captain America: Civil War**, which has already started production, this past month has seen a frontrunner emerge for the role. It's believed that the shortlist to play Peter Parker was made up of Asa Butterfield, Timothee Chalamet, Tom Holland, Liam James and Nat Wolff, although the firm leader at this stage is **Ender's Game**'s Butterfield. The teen Parker already exists in the MCU, just we haven't seen him yet. That will change when **Civil War** arrives on May 6th, 2016, with a solo Spider-Man movie then confirmed for July 28th, 2017. Interestingly enough, Sony Pictures is also developing an animated Spider-Man movie that will have no ties to any current or previous live-action incarnations of Spidey. That animated adventure will be developed by **The LEGO Movie**'s Christopher Miller and Phil Lord.

Flipping back to **Captain America: Civil War**, it's been revealed what mystery role Daniel Brühl will be playing in the Russo Brothers' movie. As speculated, Brühl will indeed be playing Baron Zemo, although it will be the Helmut Zemo version of the character. Father Heinrich Zemo was the first Baron Zemo, although Helmut followed daddy dearest's villainous lead years later after falling in a vat of Adhesive X. Helmut often teamed with Armin Zola and Batroc the Leaper over the years, and both of those characters have already appeared in the MCU. The villain also changed his stripes later down the line and led The Thunderbolts, a group of reformed rogues.

After finishing **Civil War**, Anthony and Joe Russo will then turn their attention to the two-part **Avengers: Infinity War**. With the brothers taking over the central Avengers franchise from Joss Whedon, the two-parter has now found itself some writers. Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely have been hired to pen the script for the two movies, and the duo are already big favourites with Marvel Studios and Disney after having penned **Captain America: The First Avenger**, **Captain America: The Winter Soldier** and the upcoming **Captain America: Civil War**, not to mention having done some rewrite work on **Thor: The Dark**

World and also being heavily involved in the **Agent Carter** series. **Avengers: Infinity War Part I** is set for a May 4th, 2018 release, with **Part II** to follow on May 3rd, 2019.

Switching attention to 20th Century Fox's Marvel world, James Mangold's **Wolverine 3** has brought in **Heroes** and **Green Lantern** scribe Michael Green to pen the script for what is looking likely to be Hugh Jackman's last outing as Logan. That film is currently pencilled in for a March 3rd, 2017 release. Whether or not Jackman makes an appearance in Bryan Singer's **X-Men: Apocalypse** remains to be seen, although Lucas Till is one face who will be returning for Singer's upcoming X-movie. Till played Alex Summers, aka Havoc, in **X-Men: First Class** and **X-Men: Days of Future Past**, and director Singer has also confirmed that **Apocalypse** will see Alex share screen time with brother Scott (Tye Sheridan) for the first time. In new additions, Olivia Munn has been brought into the fold to play Betsy Braddock, aka telepathic ninja Psylocke. **X-Men: Apocalypse** will be released on May 27th, 2016.

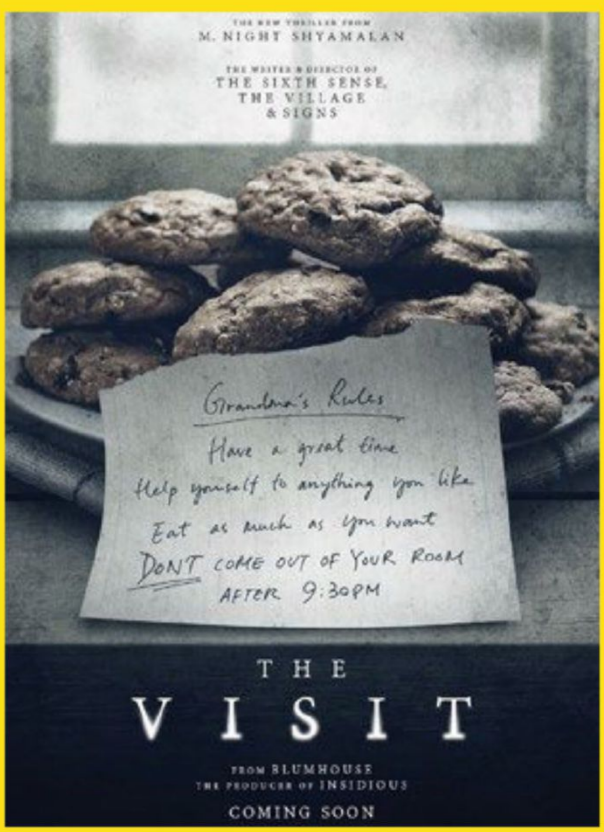
Over to the small screen and Marvel's Netflix-exclusive shows, and it appears that there could be some movement on the Danny Rand front. The Charlie Cox-starring **Daredevil** is now in the book, the Krysten Ritter-starring **A.K.A. Jessica Jones** is to follow later this year, then the Mike Colter-starring **Luke Cage** should be arriving early next year, but **Iron Fist** has yet to find its lead ahead of making its debut in the second half of next year. Well that could be about to change, for Ryan Phillippe has revealed that Marvel want to meet him to discuss a part in one of their Netflix shows, with speculation suggesting that the role in question could be martial arts master Danny Rand, alias Iron Fist. Additionally, after winning rave reviews from fans and critics alike, **Daredevil** has already been confirmed for a second season, which will supposedly arrive at some point in 2016.

On one final Marvel note, Nick Blood's Lance Hunter and Adrianne Palicki's Mockingbird will be featuring in an **Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.** spin-off show. Details on the show are scarce at this point, although Jeffrey Bell and Paul Zbyszewski will be developing the series. As well as this new show, John Ridley is also developing *another* new show set in that world that is said to be a *"reinvention of an existing superhero character"*. As for **S.H.I.E.L.D.**, it's unconfirmed at this stage, but it's believed that the show will shortly be renewed for a third season. AP

DC

This month has seen a little bit of a shake-up in the DC Cinematic Universe with Michelle MacLaren being replaced by Patty Jenkins as the director of **Wonder Woman**. The old *"creative differences"* line was initially given as the official reasoning, with it claimed that MacLaren was looking to make the movie an almost *Braveheart*-esque tale of war and struggle whilst Warner Bros is looking for a more character-driven story. As such, **Monster**'s Jenkins has been brought in to helm the Gal Gadot-starrer, still currently on track for a June 23rd, 2017 release. Before getting her own movie, Wonder Woman will, of course, be making her debut in next year's **Batman V Superman: Dawn of Justice**.

After **Batman V Superman** arrives next March, next up is David Ayer's **Suicide Squad**. The already jam-packed ensemble has added two more names this month. Most interesting is the addition of rapper Common. When **Mad Max**'s George Miller put together his doomed **Justice League** movie in the 2000s, Common was on board to play the John Stewart version of Green Lantern. At this stage, the rapper-turned-actor's **Suicide Squad** role is being kept a mystery. One rumour doing the rounds is that Common will actually be Black Manta, one of Aquaman's main villains, whilst there are some who believe that he could actually end up finally playing John Stewart. The other new addition to **Suicide Squad** is **Twilight**'s Alex Meraz, again in an unconfirmed role, and these new faces join a crammed cast that features Jared Leto as The Joker, Margot Robbie as Harley Quinn, Will Smith as Deadshot, Jai Courtney as Boomerang, Cara Delevingne as Enchantress, Joel Kinnaman as Rick Flag, Karen Fukuhara as Katana, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje as Killer Croc, Jay Hernandez as El Diablo, Adam Beach as Slipknot, and Viola Davis as Amanda Waller. There are also unconfirmed roles for Scott Eastwood (believed to



A pair of posters have surfaced for M. Night Shyamalan's upcoming flick **The Visit**, both very different in tone suggesting Mr Twisty still likes to play games with his audience. The film, which is released on September 11th, features a pair of young kids staying with their grandparents, who may not necessarily have Werther's and tea cakes on the agenda.

After a trailer that actually made Josh Trank's **Fantastic Four** reboot look promising, comes a lacklustre by-the-numbers banner (and the obligatory individual character posters). Still, there's not long left before we find out how good/bad/downright awful (*delete as appropriate) the film is on August 6th.

be Wonder Woman love interest Steve Trevor), Raymond Olubowale (thought to be King Shark), and Ike Barinholtz (understood to be Hugo Strange). Additionally, Jesse Eisenberg's Lex Luthor is set to make an appearance, and there's even talk of a brief cameo for Ben Affleck's Batman. So yeah, the villain-centric movie is certainly as tightly-packed as a human centipede! **Suicide Squad** is currently set for an August 5th, 2016 release, and these past weeks have also given us our first look at the majority of the rogues on show in Ayer's film.

With Jason Momoa's Aquaman another who will be making his DCCU debut in **Batman V Superman**, there's been some developments on the King of Atlantis' solo movie this month. STARBURST fave James Wan is believed to be in talks with Warners over helming July 2018's **Aquaman**. Wan is best known for the likes of **Saw** and **The Conjuring**, and his recent **Furious 7** has been doing ridiculous numbers at the global box office recently. The director is also currently shooting **The Conjuring 2** here in the UK (rumoured to be based on 'The Enfield Poltergeist') and is believed to be on board for an eighth **Fast and Furious** movie as well, not to mention he's in talks with Sony about helming their live-action **Robotech** film.

Moving over to the small screen, and the only real news of note is the addition of **Attack the Block**'s Franz Drameh to The CW's upcoming **Arrow**/**Flash** spin-off show. His role is that of Jay Jackson, described as *"a former high school athlete whose pro-career was derailed by injury. Now making ends meet as an auto mechanic, Jay will come to have a surprising affiliation to the S.T.A.R. Labs crew."* Based on that description, it appears that the character could be a small screen adaptation of Cyborg or possibly even Black Lightning or Static Shock. As well as Drameh, the currently untitled spin-off show has a cast made up of Brandon Routh as The Atom, Victor Garber as Martin Stein, Wentworth Miller as Captain Cold, Dominic Purcell as Heat Wave, Ciara Renee as Hawkgirl, Arthur Darvill as Rip Hunter, and an unconfirmed role for Caity Lotz, who played the presumed-dead Sara Lance/Canary in **Arrow**. The spin-off is set to debut next year. AP

SNEAK PEEK

Here's our first look at Stephen Amell as the handyman-turned-vigilante Casey Jones from **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2**. Currently shooting under **Earth to Echo**'s Dave Green, **Arrow** star Amell joins Megan Fox and the pizza-scoffing reptiles in the sequel to the maligned, but entertaining, 2014 reboot. **TMNT2** hits screens on June 3rd, 2016.

horrorchannel

A round-up of what not to miss this month on The Horror Channel...

MAY 27th - Death Proof (2007) and **Planet Terror** (2007)
Originally released in the US as **Grindhouse**, Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez (respectively) teamed-up for this homage to old-school '70s sleazy cinema. Unmissable.

+++

JUNE 5th - Outpost: Black Sun (2012)
The sequel to the 2008 film in which the zombie Nazi Storm Troopers return to wreak havoc – maybe not the **Citizen Kane** of horror movies, but fun nevertheless!

+++

JUNE 12th - Before Dawn (2012)
Directed by and starring Dominic Brunt (from TV's **Emmerdale**), this is a kitchen sink zombie apocalypse. A devastating emotional drama with some undead chomping thrown in!

+++

JUNE 13th - The Collector (2009)
UK TV premiere of the shocker with the masked serial killer and his tortuous ways. The sequel, **The Collection** follows a week later on JUNE 20th.

+++

For those wanting something less gruesome, **Classic Doctor Who** continues its run on the channel with stories including Tom Baker's **City of Death**, Jon Pertwee's **Carnival of Monsters** and **Inferno**. There's also a chance to enjoy the 1966 **Batman: The Movie** on MAY 26th. Remember when the Dark Knight was fun?

Horror Channel is available on SKY 319, Virgin 149, Freeview 70, Freesat 138 and TalkTalk 487.

STAR WARS

The annual get-together of all things **Star Wars**, Celebration took place in April in Anaheim, California. Among the delights for fans were the reveal of a new trailer for **Star Wars: The Force Awakens** (and indeed the Internet did explode), and the first real titbits about **Rogue One**, the first of the standalone films already announced. The Gareth Edwards-directed film will focus on a group of Rebels on a mission to steal the plans for the Empire's Death Star, and will lead almost directly into **A New Hope**.

There has also been the news that Josh Trank is no longer directing the second (as yet untitled) spinoff film. The **Chronicle** director was conspicuous by his absence at Celebration, citing having the flu as the reason, but rumours abound that he was asked by Disney execs not to show up.

An official statement was posted on the **Star Wars** website: "*After a year of having the incredible honour of developing with the wonderful and talented people at Lucasfilm, I'm making a personal decision to move forward on a different path. I've put a tremendous amount of thought into this, and I know deep down in my heart that I want to pursue some original creative opportunities. That said, the **Star Wars** universe has always been one of my biggest influences, and I couldn't be more excited to witness its future alongside my millions of fellow **Star Wars** fans. I want to thank my friends Kathleen Kennedy, Kiri Hart, Simon Kinberg, and everyone at Lucasfilm and Disney for the amazing opportunity to have been a part of this. May the Force be with you all.*" Whether there's any truth to the other murmurs that Fox were not happy with Trank's performance on **Fantastic Four**, causing producer Kinsberg to reconsider his position, remains pure speculation for now. The standalone films now go under the **Star Wars Anthology** banner, with **Rogue One** hitting cinemas on December 16th, 2016 and the second sometime in 2018. Before then, however, those of you who collect the ever-expanding **Star Wars** toy range need to put September 4th in their diaries, as that's when **The Force Awakens** merchandise will hit shelves. Start applying for the overdraft now.

CUBED

And remake hell continues as Lionsgate announce that Vincenzo Natali's classic debut **Cube** is getting a do-over. Unimaginatively titled **Cubed**, it will be helmed by Saman Kesh (whose short **Controller** is worth checking out) with Philip Gawthorne (who has penned episodes of **Casualty**, folks!) writing. Are there NO new ideas?

AND FINALLY...

Another sacred cow is getting the remake treatment, with Nicolas Roeg's 1973 classic **Don't Look Now** being developed. StudioCanal and The Picture Company's Alex Heineman and Andrew Rona will be producing the redo, which is already in the early development stage and currently looking to find a studio home. No writer or director is on board at this time.

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Earlier this year saw rumours surface of a **Galaxy Quest** remake. Now it appears that the property is indeed to be brought back to screens, although they will be of the small variety. Yes, Paramount is looking to move forward with a **Galaxy Quest** TV series. Writer of the original film, Robert Gordon, will be working on the script for the show, as well as serving as executive producer with Dean Parisot and Mark Johnson, the original film's director and producer, respectively.

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The new **Power Rangers** movie, originally due on July 22nd 2016, has been pushed back to an inauspicious date of January 13th 2017. **Project Almanac**'s Dean Isrealite directs.

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It looks like the long mooted adaptation of Joe Haldeman's **The Forever War** is finally happening, with Channing Tatum attached to star and produce alongside Roy Lee (**The Voices**). Formally meant to be a Ridley Scott film, Joe Spaihts (**Prometheus**) is said to be writing for a Warner Bros release.

TTC 413 WAS WRITTEN BY ANDREW POLLARD, MARTIN UNSWORTH EDITED BY MARTIN UNSWORTH.

JURASSIC WORLD

PREVIEW

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2001, THE PARK GATES ARE OPENING. STARBURST TAKES THE GUIDED TOUR OF JURASSIC WORLD...

NOT YET EXTINCT

BY KIERON MOORE

The T-Rex attack on the jeeps. "*Clever girl.*" Raptors in the kitchen. Jeff Goldblum's chuckle. John Williams' unforgettable theme. These and many more iconic moments made Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* one of Hollywood's most beloved blockbusters. Naturally, it was followed by one sequel, then another, and naturally, they fell foul of the law of diminishing returns (for our analysis of exactly what was wrong and right with each of the three films, see the retrospective on page 16).

But the series never went too far astray to stop fans being ravenous for more, and rumours of a fourth film persisted for a long, long while. *Jurassic Park III* director Joe Johnston denied its existence, then signed up to direct it, and then buggered off to do *Captain America: The First Avenger*. Script drafts were written, leaked, and dumped when Spielberg didn't like them. Various cast members gave various vague answers about ever returning. Progress was slow, and at the start of the 2010s, almost a decade after the last instalment, it looked like the *Jurassic Park* series truly was extinct.

But, to paraphrase Dr. Ian Malcolm, Hollywood finds a way. Concrete info started coming in, with Colin Trevorrow, director of indie time travel comedy *Safety Not Guaranteed* (see page 46), announced as the director of the fourth film in March 2013, and the title *Jurassic World* revealed in September that year. Despite rumours about John Krasinski and Josh Brolin taking the lead role, man-of-the-moment Chris Pratt was soon confirmed as the person who'll face the next wave of dino terror. The bones were in place for our next visit to Isla Nublar...

A WHOLE NEW WORLD?

That's right, *Jurassic World* takes us back to the iconic island location of the first film. Twenty-two years after John Hammond's unique holiday destination had a particularly rocky opening, there's a new park in its place, and this one's actually running rather nicely... so far.

The backstory is thus: in 1998, the Masrani Global Corporation bought up InGen, aiming to bring John Hammond's dream to life without there being any major massacres for once. They built Jurassic World, a fully functioning dinosaur park, on the site of Hammond's doomed Jurassic Park, and kitted it up with a state of the art security system and a crack team of military-trained specialists. And you know what – it went well. After opening in 2005 (if you're counting, that's twelve years after film one, four after film three), it became the number one family holiday destination and probably put Disneyland out of business in the process. But, ten years later, a lack of new attractions meant attendance started to decline, and so the park's geneticists set to work on artificially engineering a new dinosaur. Guess how well that went.

JURASSIC PARKS AND RECREATION

But it's OK because Chris Pratt is here to save the day. *Guardians of the Galaxy*'s Pratt plays Owen Grady; a – get this – Velociraptor tamer. Now that's a career that Andy Dwyer, the lovable simpleton Pratt made his name playing in sitcom *Parks and Recreation*, could only dream about. Decked out in a neat leather waistcoat, with wisecracks prepared for any situation, and able to ride a motorcycle through the jungle while raptors run alongside him, Grady is a classic adventure hero, and it's clear why the rumours of Pratt being the new Indiana Jones built up so much steam.

Pratt's joined by Bryce Dallas Howard (*Spider-Man 3*, *Terminator Salvation*) as Claire Dearing, the park's operations manager. That's a pretty boring job title compared to Velociraptor tamer, and indeed she doesn't seem to have Grady's enthusiasm for life, as made clear by a minor internet controversy when a clip of the two was released. There's clearly a romantic subplot between Grady and Dearing, and the clip showed her rejecting his flirtatious advances because she's overly organised and stuck-up compared to his laid-back, heroic demeanour, leading geek king Joss Whedon to criticise it publicly for being "70's-era sexist". Whedon later apologised for the "bad form" of criticising a fellow filmmaker's upcoming project, only making the situation more awkward. He has a point, though.

At least if the romantic plot ends up a bit cringey, the villainous characters might be more interesting. Irrfan Khan (*The Amazing Spider-Man*, *Life of Pi*) plays Simon Masrani, CEO of the Masrani Corporation and the owner of Jurassic World. He bought out John Hammond's company wanting to continue the great man's dream but no doubt will be motivated by turning a profit when he makes the mistakes that lead to the dangerous new dinosaur getting free. Vincent D'Onofrio (*Daredevil*, *Men in Black*), meanwhile, plays Vic Hoskins, head of InGen's private security division, which Grady and Dearing will also come up against. Yep, the company now deals in private militaries and unarmed drones as well as dinosaurs and family holidays. And probably coffee shops as well. Hammond's dream, eh?

Jurassic World's staff room also includes Lowery, the park's tech-savvy operator (Jake Johnson, who's worked with Trevorrow before on *Safety Not Guaranteed*), Katashi Hamada (Brian Tee – *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*, *The Wolverine*), an armed and dangerous member of the euphemistically-named Asset Containment Unit, and Barry (Omar Sy – *X-Men: Days of Future Past*), Grady's fellow tamer.

But you can't have a dinosaur theme park without some young guests to terrify. Enter Nick Robinson (the *Kings of Summer* star, not the BBC political commentator) and Ty Simpkins (the kid from *Iron Man 3* and *Insidious*). They play Zach and Gray, Dearing's nephews, who are sent on a trip to the park by their parents, Judy Greer (*Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, *Arrested Development*) and Andy Buckley (*The Office*), only to get caught up in all the mayhem.

But, we hear you ask, where's Sam Neill? Jeff Goldblum? Vince Vau – oh, you're not bothered about Vince Vaughn? Well, despite many rumours, and demands from fans, none of the main cast from the earlier three films will be returning – with one exception. B. D. Wong reprises his role from the first film as Dr. Henry Wu. He may have only had a small part to play first time round, but Trevorrow has promised he'll be doing more this time. As chief geneticist of the team that created the dinosaurs for Hammond's original Jurassic Park, he

seems to hold a similar role in the genetic engineering going on at Jurassic World.

Also appearing in as-yet-unknown roles are Katie McGrath (*Merlin*'s Morgana), Lauren Lapkus (*Orange is the New Black*), and James DuMont (*American Horror Story*).

WALKING WITH DINOSAURS

But, of course, the humans are only half of a *Jurassic Park* film's cast, and arguably, the real stars are the ones who are notably scalier. But which members of the dinosaur kingdom will be terrorising our heroes this time around?

Grady, of course, has his posse of raptors. It's an intriguing relationship he has with these speedy little fellas, who've terrorised the leads in all three previous films – a relationship which Trevorrow has compared to real-life naturalists who've forged connections with dangerous predators. Grady may be able to ride side by side with the raptors, but that doesn't mean they're not going to have anybody's hand off.

Also confirmed to be reappearing are the horny Triceratops, the air-borne Pterodactyls, and the big ol' T-Rex, still grumpy about its short arms and not afraid to show it.

But what's really getting us excited are the two new creatures causing all kinds of chaos, one of which is the Mosasaurus – an immense, eighteen-metre-long aquatic carnivore that once ruled the seas and can now be seen chomping up a shark in one bite at its regular feeding show. Take that, *Jaws*!

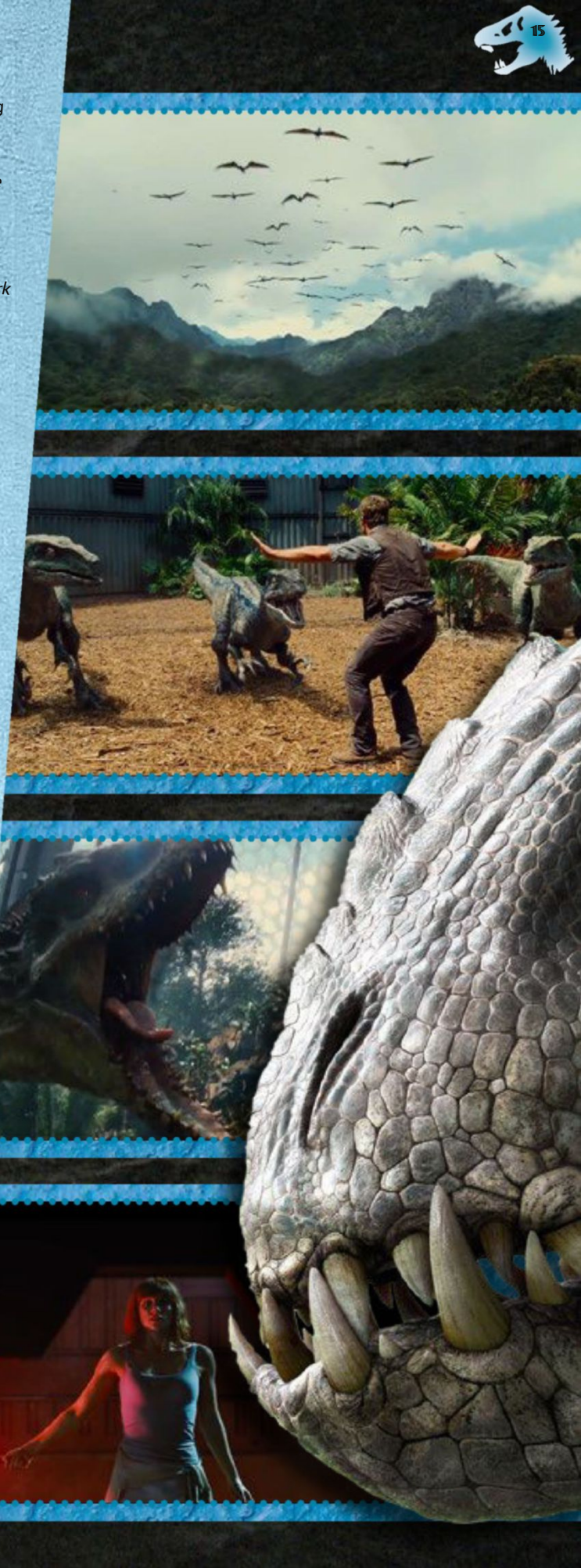
And, of course, there's Masrani's new creation, the hybrid known as Indominus Rex. Having warned that playing God and making a new dinosaur is "*probably not a good idea*", Grady is proved predictably right when this beast ends up going on a murderous rampage. We've seen little of this Frankensaurus so far, other than a point-of-view shot here and a claw there; a good sign that Trevorrow knows how to ramp up the tension, so let's hope Indominus Rex doesn't disappoint when revealed in its full bloodthirsty glory.

However, to carry on the theme of intelligent people calling *Jurassic World* into question, several scientists have criticised what's been revealed so far; whereas the original movie stuck surprisingly closely to what was known about dinosaurs at the time – to the extent that it changed the public perception of dinosaurs away from the misconception that they were all slow, dumb, lumbering things –Trevorrow's team have ignored everything that's been discovered in the past twenty years, including the fact that Velociraptors were in fact more feathery than scaly, sticking to what's seen as a safe commercial bet rather than bringing new scientific fact to the public eye and inspiring a new generation of dinosaur boffins as Spielberg did.

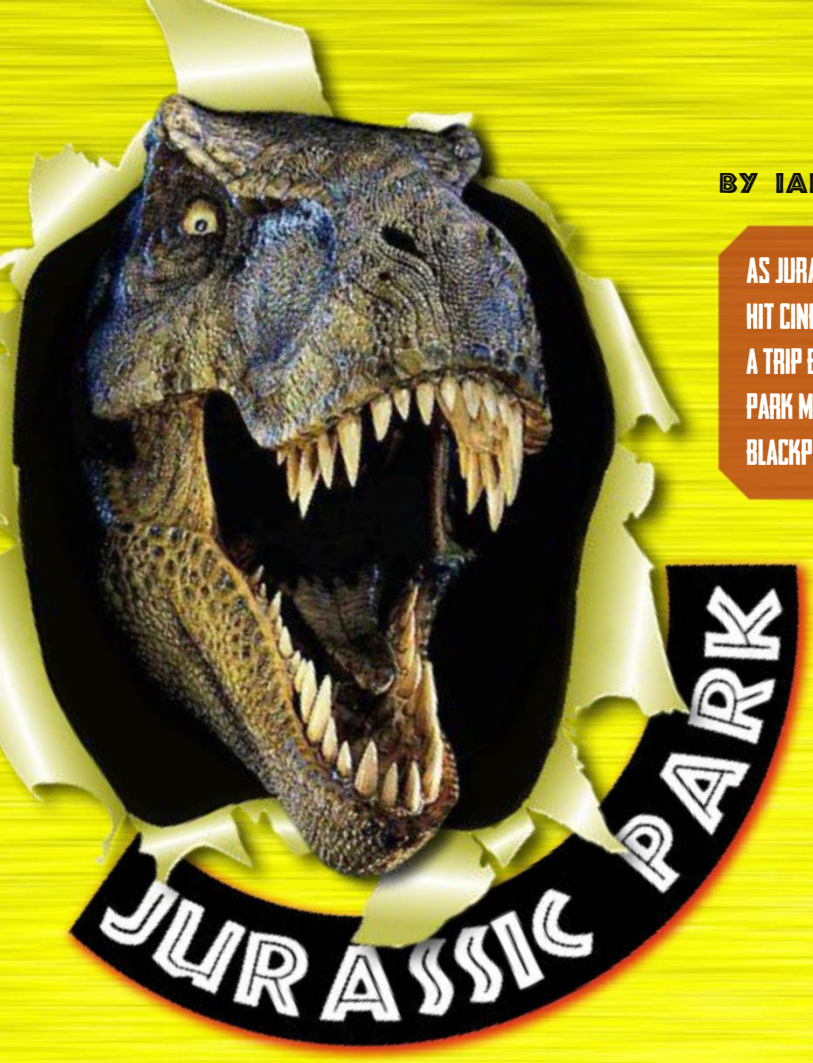
PLAN YOUR VISIT TODAY

Both Whedon and the world's paleontologists may have valid points, but nonetheless it's hard not to get excited about returning to Isla Nublar. It's been a long time coming, but we here at STARBURST are donning our jungle gear and getting ready to run for our lives as a fourth wave of prehistoric chaos breaks out, as can you when *Jurassic World* opens its gates to cinemagoers.

JURASSIC WORLD roars onto UK screens on June 11th.



WELCOME TO JURASSIC PARK



BY IAIN ROBERTSON

AS JURASSIC WORLD PREPARES TO HIT CINEMAS, STARBURST TAKES A TRIP BACK TO THE ONLY THEME PARK MORE DANGEROUS THAN BLACKPOOL PLEASURE BEACH...

Not only did 1990's TV series *E.R.* give the world George Clooney, which was very nice of it, it also gave birth to a film series that would change the course of cinema. Back in 1989, author and former doctor Michael Crichton was discussing with Steven Spielberg a screenplay he was developing based on his medical experiences. Whilst five years later, that screenplay would result in the pair collaborating on the long-running medical drama, the author mentioned a novel he was working on, revolving around cloned dinosaurs.

The resulting novel was, of course, *Jurassic Park*, and it went on to become Crichton's most successful, best known book. It revisited many of the themes that had fascinated the author throughout his career. The abuse of science and the dangers of technology are recurring motifs in Crichton's work, as is humanity's arrogance in assuming it can control its creations, an idea he'd already explored in the novel's closest counterpart, *Westworld*.

Spielberg snapped up the rights – no pun intended – prior to *Jurassic Park*'s publication in 1990 and began developing it into a movie. Following an initial screenplay by Crichton, Spielberg worked alongside screenwriter David Koepp (the first of four collaborations between the pair), toning down the violence and terror of Crichton's book. The result was a much more family friendly take on the concept than Crichton's darker source material.

Besides a core cast that included Sam Neill, Laura Dern, Richard Attenborough and Jeff Goldblum (all of whom would return in one of the sequels), Spielberg enlisted some of the biggest names in visual effects to create the film's dinosaurs. Stan Winston, hot off his double Oscar-winning work on *Terminator 2*, was hired to create practical animatronics that would be used on set. Phil Tippett meanwhile was hired to create animated dinosaurs using Go Motion – a sophisticated version of stop motion he'd used previously on the likes of *The Empire Strikes Back*'s AT-ATs and *RoboCop*'s ED-209.

However, once ILM created test footage of a computer-generated T-Rex, Spielberg made the ground breaking decision to use CGI for the more complex shots. ILM's cutting edge work creating *Terminator 2*'s T-1000 was, at that point, the most sophisticated use CGI had ever been put to. But it was a huge leap from morphing metal to creating a living, breathing creature, and *Jurassic Park* would live or die by the filmmakers' ability to put convincing dinosaurs on the screen. Tippet remained on board as dinosaur supervisor, both helping ILM create lifelike dinosaurs and giving birth to a long-running internet meme.

It's no spoiler to say that the dinosaurs the team created succeeded beyond all expectations. For the first time, audiences were treated to realistic dinosaurs, a world away from the jerky stop-motion versions they'd experienced previously. The realistic effects, coupled with the director delivering one of the best films of his career, proved a box office smash, and a franchise was born. Two sequels were produced over the next decade, and this year's *Jurassic World* looks set to be one of the biggest movies of the summer.

Jurassic Park's real legacy, however, is not its sequels, but the effect it had on blockbuster cinema. It showed filmmakers and audiences alike that cinema now truly had no limits in what was possible. George Lucas has cited it as a key influence in his decision to resurrect *Star Wars*, and he's not alone. The likes of James Cameron and Peter Jackson have continued building on the work Spielberg began, pushing technology to its limits. Without *Jurassic Park* paving the way, blockbuster cinema as we now know it would be in a very different shape. Whilst the CGI revolution has been a mixed blessing for cinema, the creatures who died out 65 million years ago have had an effect that we're still feeling today.

JURASSIC PARK

For a filmography that includes *Jaws*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *E.T.* and four *Indiana Jones* films, to be the biggest film of Spielberg's career is no mean achievement. *Jurassic Park* has the distinction of being the only one of the director's films to make a billion dollars at the box office, and currently sits in the top twenty highest earning films ever. Although *Terminator 2* demonstrated CGI's potential, Spielberg's stunning 1993 classic is the moment it truly arrived, bringing dinosaurs to life in a way few had previously dreamed possible. Amazingly, Spielberg shot the film back-to-back with *Schindler's List*, spending the days in Poland shooting his harrowing holocaust drama, and the evenings reviewing ILM's dinosaur effects.

The plot: Following the death of one of his workers, billionaire John Hammond (Richard Attenborough) hires scientists Alan Grant and Ellie Sattler along with Chaos Theorist Ian Malcolm (Neill, Dern and Goldblum) to assess the safety of his new park. Unfortunately for them, a tropical storm hits the island just as disgruntled IT worker Dennis Nedry (Wayne Knight) partakes in a spectacularly badly timed bit of industrial espionage, freeing the park's attractions – cloned dinosaurs. Suddenly the humans, including Hammond's grandkids and a chain-smoking Samuel L. Jackson, find themselves on the menu.

High point: There's so many to choose from: the awe-inspiring first shot of a Brachiosaurus; John Williams' magnificent score; the Velociraptors in the kitchen; Nedry's death; Jeff Goldblum being more Goldblum-y than ever; Ellie's trip to turn the power back on (complete with a cameo from Samuel L. Jackson's severed arm, and a Velociraptor jump scare that almost equals *Jaws*); but it's got to be the T-Rex attack. One of the director's greatest, most terrifying sequences, it's a scene filled with classic Spielberg moments. From the initial ripples in a glass of water through to a lawyer taking the world's most ill-advised toilet break, it's a perfectly realised exercise in suspense. If there's a scarier sequence in a PG-rated film, we'd like to see it.

Low point: It's got to be Grant and the kids' treetop encounter with a Brachiosaurus. Whilst it's an important character scene, as well as highlighting that the dinosaurs are animals, not mindless killing machines, it's also one of the few weak scenes in the film. That said, it does redeem itself slightly by having the dinosaur empty the contents of its nose over one of the kids.

Dino-fact: Grant's seatbelt on the helicopter that takes them to Jurassic Park consists of two female parts, instead of the traditional male/female. Grant makes the seatbelt work by tying the two ends together. It's a metaphor for the all-female dinosaur population of the island who still manage to reproduce. Clever, eh?

THE LOST WORLD
JURASSIC PARK

The titles of both sequels are actually a misnomer as neither movie take place in Jurassic Park, but on an adjacent island – Isla Sorna, as opposed to *Jurassic Park*'s Isla Nublar. Released four years after the original, Spielberg's unfairly maligned follow-up helped establish the now traditional "go bigger and darker" pattern of sequels, including a much higher body count and 200% more T-Rex than the original. Again based on a Michael Crichton novel, the film jettisoned the original movie's central couple of Neill and Dern, promoting Jeff Goldblum's Ian Malcolm to lead character, and bringing in Julianne Moore, Pete Postlethwaite and Vince Vaughn.

The plot: Hammond is no longer in charge of his company, InGen (International Genetics Technologies, fact fans). To prevent the new leaders of the company exploiting the dinosaurs, he hires a small team to visit Isla Sorna - breeding ground for Jurassic Park – to document the animals in their natural habitat, thereby rallying public support. Naturally, it all goes tits up and the team, including a reluctant Goldblum, Moore, and Vaughn, find themselves pursued by all sorts of unfriendly dinosaurs, including a family of T-Rex. To complicate matters further, a rival team, led by Pete Postlethwaite, has been sent by InGen to capture the animals, so they can be shipped off to the mainland for exhibiting.

High Point: Is it the grass or the glass? When the Velociraptors pursue survivors through a field of long grass – visible only by their tails and the parting grass – it's a brilliant visual touch, reminiscent of *Jaws*. However, the aftermath of the T-Rex attack is pure Spielberg genius. With their vehicle dangling precariously off a cliff, only a sheet of glass prevents Moore from a fatal fall. And then the glass slowly starts to splinter, things start falling on the glass and, oh yes, the T-Rex come back.

Low point: Tempting as it is to go for Goldblum's conveniently added, totally-unnecessary-to-the-plot daughter, it has to be the film's climax, featuring a T-Rex loose in San Diego. Fun as it is, it feels tacked-on and needless. Furthermore, taking the animals out of their island environment shatters the magic. Whereas the dinosaurs seem almost believable on Sorna and Nublar, by placing them on the streets of an American city, we become acutely aware that what we're watching isn't real.

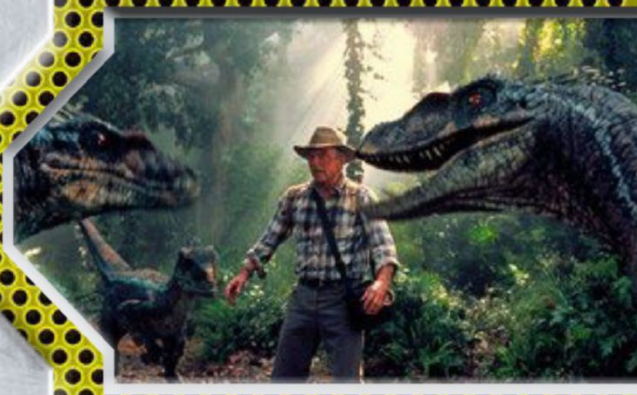
Dino-fact: The ship that brings the T-Rex to San Diego is called the SS Venture – a tip of the hat to *King Kong*.

JURASSIC PARK III

For the third instalment, released in 2001, Spielberg stepped aside from the director's chair, letting his long-time collaborator Joe Johnston take charge. Johnston had expressed an interest in directing *The Lost World* before Spielberg decided to helm it himself. A former Oscar-winning effects artist for *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, Johnston had previously directed the likes of *The Rocketeer* and *Jumanji*, (and would go on to make *Captain America: The First Avenger*) and was therefore well suited to a big budget, effects driven, family film. The sequel also saw the return of original stars Sam Neill and Laura Dern, alongside franchise newcomers William H. Macy and Téa Leoni. It's the only film in the original trilogy not adapted from one of Crichton's novels, although it does feature two major sequences from the books – the Pteranodon aviary and the attack on the boat – that were excised from the first two films.

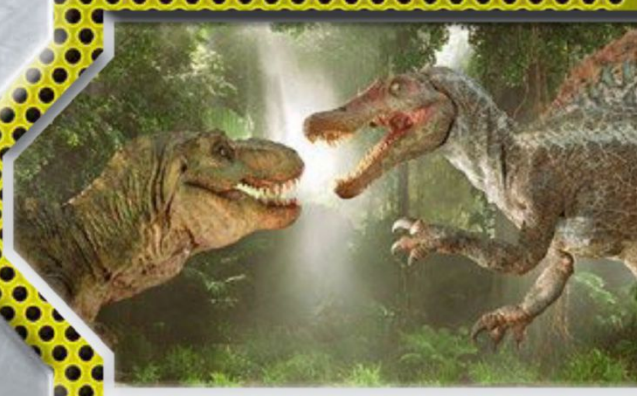
Besides re-hashing the plot of the first two movies, *Jurassic Park III* skews younger than its predecessors. The film consequently feels less threatening, and therefore less exciting than the first two movies. It was also the lowest grossing of the series, taking just over half of *The Lost World*'s $600 million.

The plot: Alan Grant (Neill) is hired by a wealthy couple to give a guided flyover of Isla Sorna. When he discovers they're lying, and they're actually there to land on the island in order to find their missing son - not to mention penniless - he's none too happy. However, considering the dinosaurs now include a rather nasty Spinosaurus, it's up to Grant to again get the group off the island in one piece.



High point: The Spinosaurus' initial attack is a perfectly orchestrated piece of dino mayhem. After causing their plane to crash, the animal proceeds to rip the fuselage apart, along with superfluous members of the cast.

Low point: Any scene involving Téa Leoni's character, Amanda Kirby. After the previous two movies offered Dern and Moore's strong, rounded, female roles, Leoni's character feels like a massive step backwards. Considering she's on an island full of some of history's most dangerous carnivores, Leoni's character seems to think it's a good idea to spend 90% of her screen time either screaming or shouting (often through a megaphone). Even more annoyingly, she survives unscathed.



Dino-fact: Ellie's secretary, Hannah, is played by Linda Park, who would go on to play Hoshi Sato on *Star Trek: Enterprise*.

Whilst the sequels may not have lived up to the magnificent original, the legacy of the series has been huge. Quite simply, it changed cinema. Oh, and it taught us that cloning dinosaurs and placing them in a theme park is a really, really, bad idea, as we're sure will be proven when *Jurassic World* hits. We predict there'll be oohing and ahhhing, shortly followed by running and screaming...

JURASSIC PIXELS

BY DOMINIC CUTHBERT

FROM THE DAWN OF THE COMPUTER AGE, THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CALL FOR GAMES FEATURING THE EXTINCT REPTILES, AND WITH JURASSIC WORLD SNAPPING AT OUR HEELS, WE PLAY DIGITAL PALAEONTOLOGIST AND TAKE A STOMP AROUND THE BEST AND WORST DINOSAUR THEMED VIDEO GAMES HAVE TO OFFER.

JURASSIC PARK, 1993

TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER, 1997

Right from the early pixelated prehistoric games, dinosaurs have been rearing their scaly heads, with *Super Mario World*'s Yoshi becoming everybody's favourite cold-blooded mascot. But it wasn't until *Jurassic Park* hit the SNES in the wake of the film's phenomenal success that dino-gaming came into its own. For anyone who enjoyed taking down the T-Rex in the first *Tomb Raider*, then *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* was the natural next step. Based on the 1974 comic book, Valiant revamped the character in 1992 and played with the original setting and concept. It switched the real world locale for The Lost Worlds, filled with dinosaurs, aliens and a skewed sense of time. The first-person shooter was released five years later, developed by Iguana Entertainment for the N64 and PC. The set-up is simple stuff, you take on the mantle of Tal'Set, a Native American and current Turok, who must stop the nefarious Campaigner. Translation: blast your way through swathes of fuming dinos. *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* went on to spawn a popular franchise that included the inevitable so-so reboot.

FPS dino-hunting is practically its own genre, and with its then superior graphics and streamlined gameplay, *Turok* led the charge, but this was hardly the definitive word on killing the cold-blooded. In fact, *Dino Crisis* is ground zero. Capcom released the game in 1999 for the PlayStation, taking the survival horror of *Resident Evil* (hardly surprising considering they shared the same development team) and ditching the living dead for, well, dinosaurs. Players took up the role of Regina, a special operations agent sent to investigate a clandestine island facility. Of course, it's overrun with the scaly kind and she must survive the onslaught to discover what really happened through puzzles, exploration and straight-up survival tactics (read: running the hell away). Dinosaurs in video games are often gimmicky, but *Dino Crisis* proved what a frightening bunch they can be. It might not have trumped *Resident Evil*, but it came pretty close. The sequels got progressively

DINO CRISIS, 1999

DINO EGGS, 1983

E.V.O.: SEARCH FOR EDEN, 1992

worse, with the third effectively putting the final nail in the franchise's coffin. But since last year, there's been rumblings of a next gen reboot. Keep your claws crossed.

If the nineties were the golden age of dino-gaming, then it was only because the previous decades laid down the Triassic architecture. Take *Dino Eggs*, released in 1983 on Apple II, Commodore 64 and IBM PC. The game was written by David Schroeder, letting players step into the shoes of Time Master Tim and travel into the past to stop dinosaurs from becoming extinct. You search for eggs and rescue the hatchlings while avoiding all the dangers coming your way, the most formidable being Dino Mum. It was a wonderful 8-bit side-scrolling platformer that out-performed a certain princess snatching, barrel throwing gorilla. Despite falling into obscurity, where only retro-fetishists have unearthed its remains, Schroeder planned to re-create the title. Sadly, an updated version hasn't surfaced since news broke in 2013. There was an independently produced redo titled *Dino Legs* (clever that), but good luck trying to play it yourself as the most recent patch wasn't made available to the public.

By the time the nineties came around, there was even more choice for those searching for something scalier for their hard-earned. *E.V.O.: Search for Eden* was released in 1992, and while it tackled a billion years of history, it did have a specific section dedicated to the Mesozoic Era, so plenty of dinosaur action. The game gave players a chance to design their own creature and take it through a tour of our planet's past, pootled along by the Earth spirit Gaia. Hardly a keystone in the evolution of the platform, but it did help pave the way for games like *Creatures* and *Spore*, so it can't have been as bad as critics made out.

Yoshi is forever the people's dino, but *Radical Rex* has to be a close second. He's a skateboarding, fire breathing T-Rex, so what's not to adore? The vibrant side-scroller was released on the Super Nintendo and Sega platforms in 1994, where the eponymous Rex set out to rescue his land and his girlfriend Rexanne from the nefarious clutches of Sethron, an evil wizard. It hardly left the same impression that *Spyro the Dragon* would go on to have, but the similarities are uncanny, after all Spyro is a scrappy, skate boarding fire breathing dragon. *Radical Rex* might not have been looked on kindly by critics but retro fever offers rose-tinted lenses, and players have been enjoying the exploits of Rex online and rating it favourably.

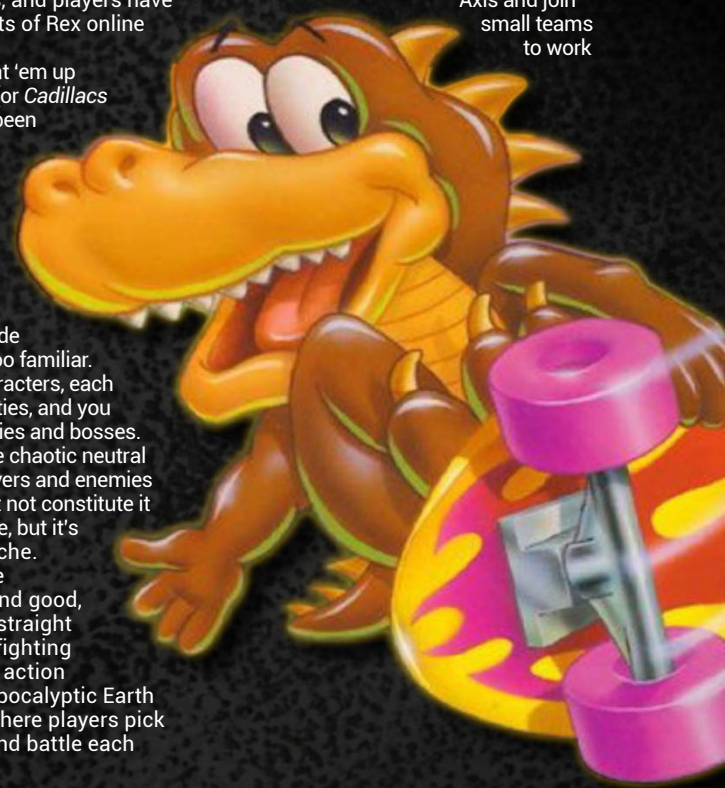
Capcom's arcade beat 'em up *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* (or *Cadillacs Kyouryuu Shinseiki*) had been released a year earlier. It was first intended as a tie-in to the short-lived, and now painfully obscure cartoon series, but the game stands on its own bombastic merits well enough. For anyone interested in arcade games, the set-up is all too familiar. There's four playable characters, each of whom has unique abilities, and you battle a melange of enemies and bosses. The eponymous dinos are chaotic neutral characters, attacking players and enemies as they see fit. This might not constitute it as a dinosaur game per se, but it's hardly an exhaustive niche.

NPDs (non-playable dinosaurs) are all well and good, but Atari set the record straight with their 1996 arcade fighting game *Primal Rage*. The action takes place on a post-apocalyptic Earth (creatively titled Urth) where players pick one of seven beasties and battle each other to determine the planet's fate. Two of the 'virtuous' and 'destructive' beasts are dinosaurs, so for our money *Primal Rage* more than counts. The game proved surprisingly forward thinking, helping to define the fighting game with damage percentages following combos and a series of mini games. It even sparked controversy with its preposterously violent fights. *Mortal Kombat* shouldn't get all the credit. It launched a franchise that included a board game, toys, comics, and, curiously, a novel from prolific tie-in author John Vornholt.

The 21st century has been a mixed bag of bones for dino games. Indeed, there's been plenty of titles that feature dinosaurs, from *Monster Hunter* to the *Far Cry* series, but few that could give *Dino Crisis* a run for its money. In terms of audacity, *Dino D-Day* might just be the best competitor. Released in 2011, it's an online multiplayer FPS, set in an alternative history where Adolf Hitler resurrected dinosaurs to aid the Nazi war effort. Hey, it's no weirder than *Wolfenstein*! Players pick either the Allied forces or the Axis and join small teams to work

RADICAL REX, 1994

CADILLACS AND DINOSAURS, 1993



DINO D-DAY, 2011

PRIMAL CARNAGE, 2012

OFF-ROAD VELOCIRAPTOR SAFARI, 2008

towards their endgame. When dinosaurs are involved, you'll be forgiven for siding with the Nazis; but if there's an inquest, you never read this magazine, right? If nothing else, the title took the saturated WW2 shooter to its illogical conclusion. At the very least it deserves kudos for cramming the screen with as many different dinos as it was able, from the Tyrannosaurus to the Protoceratops. It'll certainly keep the natural history buffs entertained, otherwise, the dinosaurs are mounted with guns, so everyone wins.

If *Dino D-Day* didn't satisfy the needs of online gamers, then *Primal Carnage* came along a year later. It opted for a *Jurassic Park*-style plot: dinosaurs have been recreated on a remote island, but escape and run amok. Players can either take on the roles of the dinosaurs, or the humans sent in to exterminate them, with a different play style depending on your choice. Opting for an asymmetrical, class based system, it was an altogether more tactical approach than *Dino D-Day*. Few titles opt for a po-faced approach when it comes to dinosaurs, but those that do often fare better than their silly counterparts (just look at *Off-Road Velociraptor Safari*). *Primal Carnage* might not be revolutionary, but it is quite possibly the best dino-themed game of the young century, with its bountiful class system and dynamic fights. Since Kickstarter casualty *The Stomping Land* bit the dust, it looks like *Primal Carnage* is the best we'll get for the time being.

Jurassic Park remains the definitive word on dinosaur movies (sorry Godzilla) but the same can't be said of video games. While the SNES title helped kick this whole thing off, it didn't have the game changing, blockbuster potential of the film. But that didn't stop developers dishing out title after title. It wasn't until the release of *Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis* in 2003 that things started to get interesting. Yes, it's basically *Rollercoaster Tycoon* with dinosaurs, but letting players create and run their own Jurassic Park was a stroke of genius.

Sadly, the same accolade can't be applied to *Jurassic Park: The Game*. Telltale Games might have carved the industry a new one with their intuitive, lushly animated episodic narratives, racking up successes with *The Wolf Among Us* and *The Walking Dead*, but their take on *Jurassic Park* was severely lacking. The game's events take place during and after the first film. It offered a decision-based narrative and real time events that typify the episodic style, but it failed to capture the marvellous park seen on the big screen, and was populated with uncharismatic characters. In the end, it just didn't differentiate itself enough from the source material, a lesson Telltale have clearly taken to heart in recent years. It might be worth another go now, hey?

Dinosaur gaming is a rare sort, and with the recent retro-renaissance it's been largely forgotten. Where was *Dino Eggs* in the *Wreck-it Ralph* movie? Where was *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* when people were getting misty-eyed in Charlie Brooker's *How Video Games Changed the World*? Still, if scientists can bring back dinosaurs from the dead, then developers can still breathe new life into an almost extinct subgenre.

JURASSIC PARK: OPERATION GENESIS, 2003

JURASSIC PARK: THE GAME, 2011

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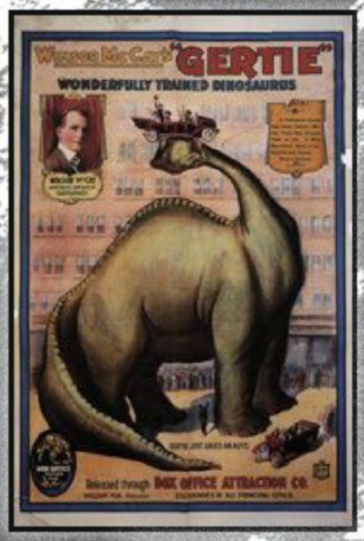
WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE SCREEN

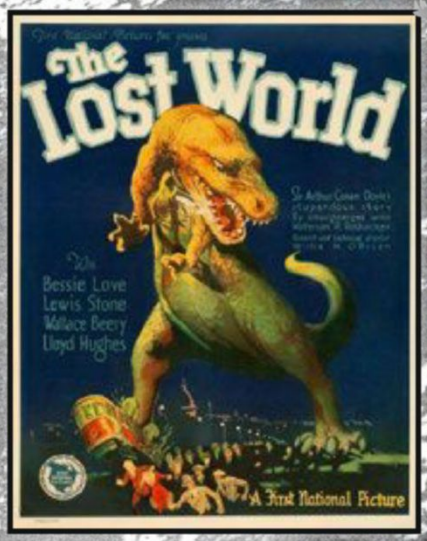
BY JOHN TOWNSEND

In 1993, Steven Spielberg, with a little help from Michael Crichton and the late Lord Attenborough, effectively 'discovered' dinosaurs for a whole new generation. With the release of *Jurassic Park*, he was however building on a cinematic love affair with these terrible lizards that goes all the way back to the silent era, a fascination that is born in our childhood, yet often remains in our adult years. While Spielberg's CGI masterpiece changed the genre forever, terrifyingly presenting realistic renditions of creatures only seen as skeletons or in books, *Jurassic Park* could not have existed without an esteemed and deep-rooted history. Here we dig through the archives to revisit some of the most significant and most interesting films of the past hundred years.

Although dinosaurs have been depicted in films from as early as the 1900s, it was a hand-drawn animation from artist and vaudevillian Windsor McCay in 1914 that first featured one of the huge beasts as the star. Gertie, as her creator named her, was initially created as a gimmick for a stage act, but the animated Brontosaurus proved popular with audiences in her own right. This was the first real prehistoric star to emerge, stemming from a short film hugely influential for both its animation techniques and originality.

The next step on the evolutionary ladder was *The Lost World* in 1925, an ambitious silent film version of Arthur Conan Doyle's famous story. While more than 15 versions of *The Lost World* have been made either for radio, television or film, it is Harry O. Hoyt's production that is by far the most interesting. Following an expedition led by the aggressive and megalomaniacal Professor Challenger (allegedly Conan Doyle's favourite character… sorry Sherlock), *The Lost World* tells of a mythical plateau hidden deep in the unexplored rainforests of South America where dinosaurs and other fantastic creatures still live and thrive. The film itself is notable for many reasons, not least of which being that it was the first feature to use stop-motion as the primary visual effect. With revolutionary techniques honed by the technical director, all round dino-expert Willis O'Brien, that allowed human actors to interact seemingly with the dinosaurs, *The Lost World* was an enormous hit. In an attempt to instil as much accuracy as possible when creating creatures that no-one has ever seen, O'Brien based his designs on the artwork of Charles R. Knight, the most renowned prehistoric artist of the time whose influential paintings have impacted numerous films. There is no doubt that *The Lost World* is the most influential and important dinosaur movie of all time, and without its pioneering techniques many of the other films on this list, including *Jurassic Park*, may not have existed.





The stop-motion expertise of O'Brien is most famous for another film he worked on several years later. In the early 1930s, Merian C. Cooper was working at RKO Pictures developing a film titled *The Most Dangerous Game*, a story focussing on a big game hunter and to be directed by his close friend Ernest Schoedsack. At the same time another film, the far more ambitious *Creation*, was in production at the same studio featuring creature effects designed by O'Brien. When Cooper saw the *Creation* footage he was initially disappointed but realised he could utilise the stop-motion techniques to develop further his own picture and used his executive position to have *Creation* shelved. Despite reservations from the RKO board, this new project was green-lit; work on *King Kong*, one of the most iconic and influential films of all time, had begun. While many of the effects involving Kong himself were created using giant models of his hands and head, which were manipulated by several men, it is the stop-motion battles between the giant ape and the creatures of Skull Island, including one with a Tyrannosaurus rex, that are as memorable as those at the Empire State Building.

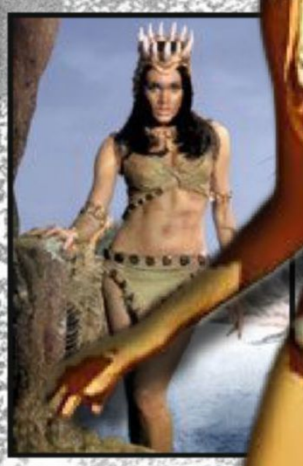
Despite the box office success of *King Kong* and the response from both the public and critics, the film received no Academy Award nominations. Sadly for O'Brien and his crew, and even after extensive campaigning on his behalf, there

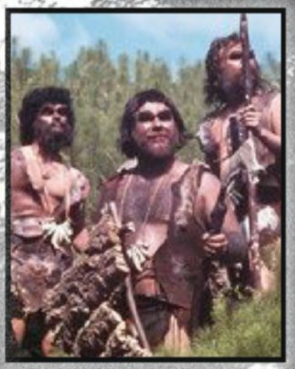
would be no category to recognise special effects until 1938, and even calls for a special award were ignored. A man who pioneered so many techniques, and left a legacy including many of the most recognisable dinosaurs and creatures ever seen in cinema would never receive the accolades his talents deserved. His legacy, though, is intact, and his creations will live long in the memory.

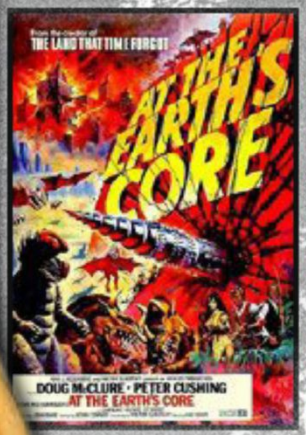
When one thinks of dinosaur films, there is another memory that refuses to become extinct. The near 50 years since its release has done nothing to dampen the teenage stirrings caused by one of the most iconic images in the whole of cinematic history, let alone that of dinosaur films. When Don Chaffey's *One Million Years B.C.* was first shown in 1966, the dinosaur stop-motion effects by Ray Harryhausen were astounding, and were in no small part responsible for a strong box office and in making the film one of the most successful at that time for British studio Hammer. On the back of this success, the film company produced more prehistorically-inspired films including *Slave Girls* and *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth* that, while containing some decent effects, never repeated the success of *One Million Years B.C.* To understand why, we must return to that iconic image.

Despite credit for her role in *Fantastic Voyage* in 1966, Raquel Welch was yet to hit the big time. Tied to a contract with 20th Century Fox she was 'loaned' to Hammer in order to appear in their new dinosaur film. The role of Loana the Fair One had initially been offered to Ursula Andress (no stranger herself to a memorable image or two) but for Welch, it became the part that would launch her career, bringing stardom and elevating her to worldwide sex symbol. Images of her in a doe-skin bikini that were used extensively in the marketing and on the film's main poster contributed as much to the success of *One Million Years B.C.* as Harryhausen's wonderful effects. In reality, Welch only had three lines of dialogue in the entire film if you discount the grunting (which was dubbed anyway) but in truth, that didn't matter in the slightest!

One of the more interesting, and certainly better made films of the dinosaur genre is the Amicus production *The Land That Time Forgot* from 1975. As the chief British rival to Hammer, it's unsurprising that Amicus would release a prehistoric-inspired film, but perhaps it's more amazing that it was nearly ten years after the release and success of *One Million Years B.C.* for Hammer. Taking its story from an Edgar Rice Burroughs novel, director Kevin Connor produced an extremely competent film that tackled, albeit loosely at times, themes of politics and evolution, with the differences of the characters being set aside as the need for reason becomes apparent. The seriousness of the plotting didn't extend to the effects however that, due mainly to the small budget, are often unintentionally comic. Instead of expensive, time-consuming stop-motion, the filmmakers used much cheaper handheld or string controlled puppets, and the results are not entirely convincing. Not to be put off though, Amicus produced two further Burroughs adaptations in the following years. *The People That Time Forgot* was a







direct sequel, and a return to the mysterious land of Caprona from the first film, and *At the Earth's Core*, which in truth is actually less about dinosaurs and more about strange flying reptiles with mind control skills.

One area in which filmmakers have sought to take advantage of the popularity of all things dinosaur-related is in the younger cinema going market, and one animated film, in particular, has caught the imagination more than most. When *The Land Before Time* was released in November 1988, it was a critical and financial success. With heavyweight backing from esteemed names such as Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, who were credited as producers, the film caught the imagination as it followed the journey of a group of young dinosaurs heading for a mythical Great Valley where they could find safety and protection from the nasty old Tyrannosaurus. Helmed by experienced animation director Don Bluth (*An American Tail*, *Titan A.E.*), the film tackled issues of prejudice and acceptance but is most significant in that its success led the way for sequel after sequel after sequel. The next film to bear *The Land Before Time* moniker, and subtitled *Journey of the Heart*, is set for release in 2016 and will be the 13th in a series which seems to defy all logic.

It would be remiss not to mention Godzilla in any dinosaur-related discussion, so mention him we must. With more than 30 feature films under his considerable belt, the Japanese behemoth is without question the most referenced and successful of all the prehistoric contenders following his first cinematic appearance in 1954, but is he actually a dinosaur? The original Japanese name Gojira is a combination of two other words; kujira (whale) and gorira (gorilla), which most commonly refers to a monster that is the size of a whale. Not a dinosaur then perhaps, but certainly the biggest name on any list!

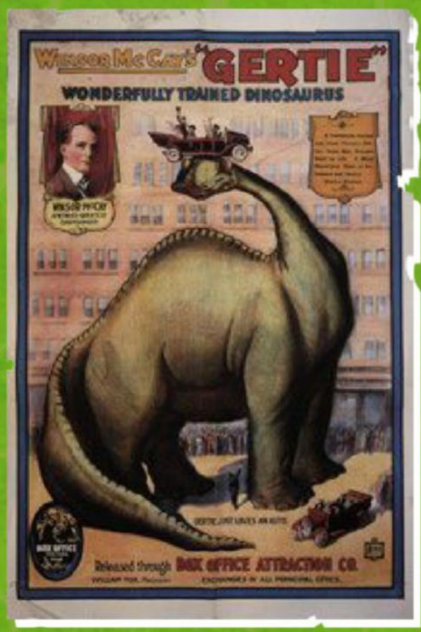
There is no question that dinosaurs still hold a fascination for all of us, whether that is through cinema or otherwise. With several films set for release this year that contain these giant lizards, this fascination also shows no sign of letting up. There is *Jurassic World*, of course, the eagerly awaited return to a franchise that began more than 20 years ago, and whose original film remains firmly established on many people's Top 10. Pixar will enter the genre properly (if we discount Rex from *Toy Story* which was, well, a toy) with *The Good Dinosaur*, a traditional story about a teenager with a big heart, who just happens to be a 70-foot Apatosaurus. Maybe even more anticipated than both of these though could be the sequel that everyone was waiting for, *Iron Sky 2*. Easily overlooked perhaps, but the trailer shows a reptilian Hitler riding a Tyrannosaurus called 'Blondi' (read that sentence again… it's worth it). If that doesn't pique your interest, then nothing will.

Whatever your preference, films featuring dinosaurs have been around for as long as cinema itself and with *Jurassic World* set to re-ignite our fascination, this would seem to be the perfect time to revisit some of the classics.

ONE MILLION CELS BC

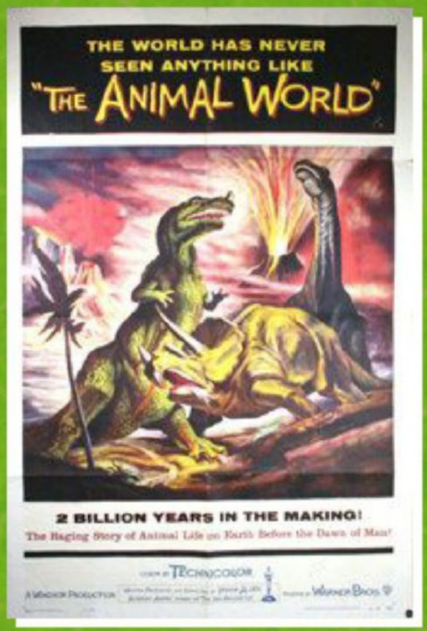
Ahead of a visit to Jurassic World, STARBURST recounts the dinosaur kingdom's animated evolution...

BY JACK BOTTOMLEY



Dinosaurs are extinct! Yeah, we may not be giving BBC News any worries with that headline, but it's a fact all the same. Today dinosaurs live on only in the historical bloodline of animals like the Tuatara and Coelacanth. So simply put, the chances of seeing a dinosaur (unless the DNA tinkerers piss about) on your way to Tesco's is pretty remote. Yes, we know, so far so obvious but stay with us because as we all know the prehistoric titans may be gone but they aren't forgotten. Dinosaurs continue to thrive in the world of film and TV. When Steven Spielberg opened the doors to Jurassic Park, he may not have been able to train Velociraptors but he and his crew could indeed create them using special effects. In this realm of effects wizardry, dinosaurs still romp, stomp and chomp like they never left. Christian Metz once said that "*In some senses, all cinema is a special effect*", so with this thought in mind, we look at the ultimate special effect... animation. In this dominion of hand-drawn, stop-motion and computer generated imagery, dinosaurs are alive and well. Over the years animation has advanced as an art form and played host to tonnes of prehistoric adventure. So get ready as we go all primeval on our tour of animated dinotopia.

Many moons ago, when animation was but an egg laid by the young creature that was cinema, one man not only introduced the world to the hand-sketched curves of the very first animated dinosaur but he created arguably the first film to properly utilise this technique (earlier pioneers J. Stuart Blackton and Émile Cohl seemed more to experiment with animation than make it integral). So in 1914, director Winsor McCay introduced us to *Gertie the Dinosaur*, a very basic 12-minute animated short by today's standards, but the rebellious Apatosaurus it introduced was a ground-breaking animated character in her own right. Predating *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* by 74 years, McCay's film was the first live-action/animation revolutionary leap that saw the director actually interact with Gertie onscreen. Gertie the Dinosaur is now over 100 years old, and she's still the grandmother of all animated dinosaurs. Not



BAMBI MEETS GODZILLA

only did McCay create the first big screen dinosaur character but he inspired a wave of animators, including a certain fella you may have heard of, Walt Disney.

Walt Disney knew a few things about animation and in 1940, his ambitious marriage of visual and aural spectacle *Fantasia* was released. *Fantasia* put animated segments alongside classical music and is particularly relevant here, as it featured a memorable section charting the history of the earth. Naturally, this history covered the dawn and demise of the dinosaurs in sweeping musical and picturesque fashion, with Igor Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring' powering the story. Before *Fantasia*, however, the stop-motion animated segments of Harry O. Hoyt's adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* would become iconic. Hoyt's 1925 film was live-action, but Willis O'Brien's stop-motion animation was an astonishing aspect, placing audiences on the front row of a prehistoric smackdown among various breeds of dinosaurs. *The Lost World* was perhaps the first hit dinosaur-centric film and the first to showcase this style of animation. The feature was a strong influence for Cooper and Schoedsack's 1933 classic *King Kong*, a film which itself featured the memorable fight between Kong and a Tyrannosaurus, which is often imitated but has yet to be outdone.

Animation continued to grow more intricate and the work of Ray Harryhausen (see page **32**) became influential and alongside O'Brien, their 10-minute animated dinosaur segment of Irwin Allen's nature documentary *The Animal World* in 1956 became another huge footprint left by the reptiles that roamed the animated earth. If you have noticed, up to this point our animated dinosaurs, Gertie aside, have been more animals than characters. This would change somewhat with a trip to Bedrock, in Hanna-Barbera's 1960-66 animated TV sitcom *The Flintstones*. Though centred on the human characters - Fred, Wilma, Barney and Betty - *The Flintstones* introduced one of the greatest dinosaur characters ever, in the Flintstone's family pet Dino. The Stone Age equivalent to man's best friend, the loyal and excitable Dino with his purple shade and his cute appeal is one of the show's most colourful characters. *The Flintstones* featured numerous dinosaurs, most either being used as a form of transport, labour or a household appliance (the show wasn't big on being factually exact), but the beloved Dino was the show's standout dinosaur and to this day is an integral part of the show's legacy.

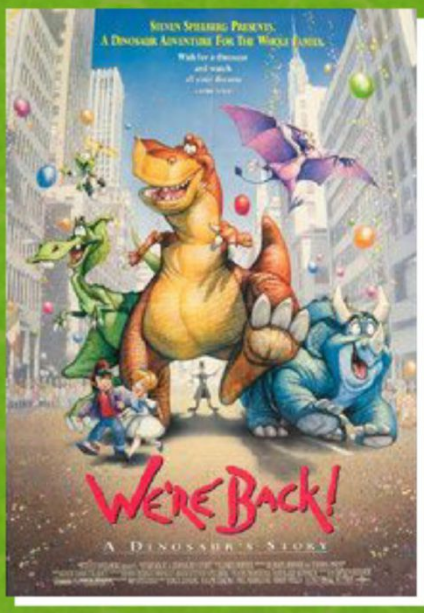
However, when we mention rather big lizard characters, one name stands snout and spines above the rest; from the land of the rising sun, Toho's growling goliath Godzilla is a cultural icon. First rearing his scaly head in Ishirō Honda's 1954 kaiju classic *Gojira*, Godzilla has, for 60 years, radioactively ravaged the opposition. However, going back to the point and indeed to another of Hanna-Barbera's, shall we say, lesser works, in 1978 audiences saw the king of the monsters land on the small screen in *Godzilla* (aka *The Animated Series* or *The Godzilla Power Hour*). H-B and Toho's series was not exactly smashing - Godzilla became more of a fire breathing big dragon randomly popping up to sort stuff out (from UFOs to Lava-eating Lizards) - but is widely remembered for its lighter version of the character, its catchy opening theme and, of course, the introduction of Godzuki - Godzilla's cowardly nephew.

However, before becoming a kids TV fixture, Godzilla did actually appear in animated form before, or at least his foot did, in Marv Newland's jokey 1½ minute short *Bambi Meets Godzilla* (1969), which accompanied *Godzilla 1985* in theatres and essentially saw Bambi get trod on by the Big G (Jeez, Bambi is unluckier than a *Top Gear* producer). Two other short animations - *Son of Bambi Meets Godzilla* and *Bambi's Revenge* - followed, bringing the unsuspecting rivalry to a close… for now. However, dinosaurs remained more an accompaniment than central characters, although the introduction of the Dinobots to the *Transformers* TV series in 1985 was one instance of noticeable impact. And various animal/Transformer hybrids would later enjoy their own TV fame in the '90s as a result. Still, it is arguable that the strongest

THE FLINTSTONES

GODZILLA THE ANIMATED SERIES

TRANSFORMERS



TOY STORY

TOY STORY 3

dinosaur characters appeared in the enduring animated franchise *The Land Before Time*.

Initially a 1988 animated film produced by Spielberg, George Lucas, Kathleen Kennedy, and Frank Marshall and directed by Don Bluth (*Pete's Dragon*), *The Land Before Time* would go on to become a multi-million dollar juggernaut that spawned merchandise, sequels, games, sing-a-longs, and a TV Series. The first film, however, was more of a drama than its sequels. It told the story of young orphaned Apatosaurus, Littlefoot, seeking solace from his destructive habitat and searching for a place called The Great Valley. Along the way he made friends in Triceratops Cera, Saurolophus Ducky, Pteranodon Petrie, and, of course, the Stegosaurus Spike, who all joined him on his quest, exploring various issues of prejudice and triumph of the spirit. Not to mention dealing with the death of a loved one and poverty, the film featured not only dinosaur-driven narrative, but also (akin to Gertie) gave its dinosaurs characteristics and heart.

The film performed well grossing $84.4 million on a $12.5 million budget, and critics were generally positive. So naturally a sequel arrived, albeit six years later, in Roy Allen Smith's *The Land Before Time II: The Great Valley Adventure* (1994). It would be the first of 12 straight-to-video sequels, with another planned for a 2016 release. Starting with the second film, the series toned down its darker plotting and became more musically driven (much like the Disney classics), while still offering a somewhat educational outlook on modern life, using the prehistoric setting and characters. The series was commonplace throughout the '90s and 2000s, and although the 2007 TV series (set after the events of the 13th film) didn't quite reach the same popularity, it (along with all the films) received a devoted following. Over 27 years, many have grown up alongside these films. *The Land Before Time* is arguably the most striking example of animated dinosaur characters; not always groundbreaking per se, but it created lasting, fully fledged characters using the land of the dinosaurs.

Naturally, the arrival of *Jurassic Park* sent the popularity of dinosaurs through the museum roof. Numerous animated shows/films featured the prehistoric predators, from reasonably successful offerings (Mattel toy line TV adaptation *Extreme Dinosaurs* (1997)), to flops like animated dinosaur movie musical *We're Back! A Dinosaur Story* (1993) and short-lived cult shows (*Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* (1993-94)). Across the world, the '90s was packed with dinosaurs, with even a new animated Godzilla show, *Godzilla: The Series*, landing on Fox in 1998 to capitalise on Roland Emmerich's film of the same year, albeit the *Pokémon* craze (itself a show featuring various Pokémon designs influenced by dinosaurs) would steal its thunder. In fact, Japanese anime has for years created some of its most iconic creatures using the blueprints of dinosaurs and continues to do so to this day.

This period also saw two notable dinosaur characters introduced to audiences. Firstly, Reptar, a fictitious movie dinosaur that became a recurring character in the animated series *Rugrats* (1991-2004). Green in colour and with spines, Reptar parodied the fandom surrounding Godzilla and debuted in the episode 'At the Movies', regularly featuring thereafter in the form of merchandise, as a vehicle in *The Rugrats Movie* (1998) voiced by Busta Rhymes (of course), and as a giant robot in *Rugrats in Paris*. Secondly and more memorably, was the character Rex, the toy dinosaur (voiced by Wallace Shawn), first introduced in Pixar's *Toy Story (1995)*. Rex became a core character in the franchise and its numerous spin-offs. A highly nervous, clumsy but very friendly chap, Rex juxtaposes the ravenous and nasty image the Tyrannosaurus has acquired over the years (as evident by the "objects in mirror" gag in *Toy Story 2* (1999)). Rex is one of his owner Andy's main toys and even when other recurring characters were absent in the emotionally torturous

EXTREME DINOSAURS

GODZILLA : THE SERIES

THE RUGRATS MOVIE

DINOSAUR

Toy Story 3 (2010), Rex was still there, and in that film was introduced to brand new Triceratops toy Trixie (Kristen Schaal), who in many ways was his characterial equal. Also, last year's holiday special *Toy Story That Time Forgot* expanded both characters and added others, in a loving tribute to '90s action brand dinosaur toys.

However post-millennium and since CGI animation developed into a more complex territory, dinosaurs have seemingly gone back to their earlier days of being more realistic. New technologies have allowed filmmakers to create an experience as near to walking with dinosaurs as possible. Indeed, Disney's critically polarising but visually accomplished 2000 CGI animated film *Dinosaur* (which cost $127.5 million - the most expensive film that year), told a dramatic story, but was more centered on accuracy in terms of its dinosaur character designs. Although the film did mix up its evolutionary eras (having Lemurs play a large part in the story) much to the chagrin of some critics... picky sods.

This idea of moving towards creating animated dinosaur documentaries was furthered by IMAX documentary/edutainment films like *T-Rex: Back to the Cretaceous* (1998) and was a throwback to early cinematic dino-spectacle. Nevertheless, it was the award-winning television documentary miniseries *Walking with Dinosaurs* (1999) that caused the largest tremor in this movement. The miniseries attempted to, in nature documentary fashion, educate viewers on the daily lives of dinosaurs, using (at that time) state of the art animation. The series even got its own beautifully rendered film adaptation in 2013, but as handsomely made as *Walking with Dinosaurs: The 3D Movie* was, it bafflingly featured a subpar Disney-lite plot, which was at odds with the source material and meant that the film received poor reviews and box office.

So as we amble towards the future, much like the dinosaurs did a million years ago, we wonder what it will hold (hopefully not a meteorite again!). Will Colin Trevorrow's *Jurassic World* cause another dino-explosion? Will animation capitalise on its favorite big ass reptiles and march them back to the top of the filmic food chain? *The Good Dinosaur*, from Pixar, will be the next big animation tackling the prehistoric, and arrives this winter. That film takes place in a world where dinosaurs never died out; focusing on a young boy who forms a bond with a nice natured Apatosaurus. Still, going from history, dinosaurs have never really died. Since the early days of cinema, they have been a constant of animation and special effects and the more techniques advance, perhaps the more immersed we will become in the lives of these extinct reptilian giants. That being said, let's hope animation remains one of the foremost platforms to do so, and people don't start taking notes from those sodding bioengineers! We'll go for animation over annihilation, ta very much!

WALKING WITH DINOSAURS: THE 3D MOVIE

As part of our celebration of all things JURASSIC, we pay tribute to the man who brought so many creatures to life and influenced a generation...

"My early exposure to all the leviathans of the Saturday matinee creature features inspired me, when I grew up, to make Jurassic Park. And the artist magician who breathed life into clay figures and wire armatures and made us, as kids, happily fear for our lives, was the dean of special effects, Ray Harryhausen. All those so called "B-movies" were the A-movies of my childhood. He inspired generations." **Steven Spielberg**

The legendary Ray Harryhausen is a name that means so much to so many. When he sadly passed away in 2013 at the grand old age of 92, there were many genre fans who were both stricken with grief yet reminiscing with wondrous smiles at the memories that the iconic Harryhausen had given to them. So let's take a stroll through memory lane as we look back at the life and work of a true genre great.

Creating the Man

Born Raymond Frederick Harryhausen in Los Angeles, California way back on June 29th, 1920, the genius of Harryhausen would be with us until his passing on May 7th, 2013. During his near-93 years on this planet, he shared his fantastic talent and imagination with so many of us through his masterful, revolutionary stop-motion animation work that had such a unique charm, warmth and sincerity to it.

Whilst Harryhausen's work would inspire multiple generations, it was 1933's *King Kong* that served to inspire the young Ray to try his hand at formative animated science fiction shorts. In particular, it was Willis O'Brien's animation work with Kong and his utilisation of the Skull Island locale that caught Harryhausen's eye. So impressed with O'Brien's *King Kong* work, Ray Harryhausen would use a mutual friend to set up a meeting with his idol in order to get some advice and some feedback on the models he himself had by now created. Following this meeting, Harryhausen enrolled in graphic arts and sculpture classes in order to fine-tune his craft. Along with new friend Ray Bradbury, Harryhausen became part of Forrest J. Ackerman's Science Fiction League before then landing his first commercial job working with George Pal on his *Puppetoons* shorts. The basis for him getting this job? That'd be an original demo of Harryhausen's that happened to feature some battling dinosaurs.

Like so many others of that time, Ray Harryhausen would be affected by World War II. He would serve as part of the United States Army Special Services Division under a certain Colonel Frank Capra. As part of his work under Capra, Harryhausen would get a further education in the art of making a production, with plenty of his time spent creating short films highlighting developments in the field of military equipment. This period would also see him work with composer Dimitri Tiomkin and *Dr. Seuss*' Ted Geisel. By the time the war was over, Ray had plenty of unused 16mm film on his hands, which he would put to use by creating a batch of fairytale-type shorts collectively known as his 'Teething-rings'.

It would be in 1947 that Harryhausen got to work on his first major movie, landing an assistant animator gig alongside Willis O'Brien on *Mighty Joe Young*, which was released in 1949. O'Brien would actually nab an Academy Award for Best Special Effects for the movie,

A RAY OF INSPIRATION

By Andrew Pollard

although Harryhausen carried out the majority of the actual animation work seen in the film. Following this film, Harryhausen's first solo movie stint was around the corner, taking sole control of all technical effects on 1953's *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*. The film would prove to be a huge success across the globe and brought in a decent amount of cash for Warner Brothers. As such, Harryhausen's star was firmly on the rise. Not only that, this is the film that marked the first time that the SFX wiz would implement the technique of splitting the background and foreground of a shot into two images in order to integrate live-action animated models via exquisite frame-by-frame precision. This was ridiculously revolutionary at the time, bringing vast praise and plaudits the way of Harryhausen.

Branching out into something a little different, 1953 saw Harryhausen assisting producer Irwin Allen to create the live-action documentary *The Sea Around Us*. This was another project that was well received, so much so that it managed to grab the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature Film. The duo of Harryhausen and Allen would reteam, along with Willis O'Brien, for 1956's *The Animal Kingdom*. The highlight of this film was an 8-minute opening sequence involving stop-motion dinosaurs for which Harryhausen and O'Brien received a hugely positive response.

Swinging '60s and Skeletons

After *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, up next in the feature film realm for this rapidly growing talent would be 1955's radiation-infused octopus tale *It Came from Beneath the Sea*, 1956's ET fodder *Earth vs. The Flying Saucers* and 1957's lizard-like alien adventure *20 Million Miles to Earth*, but it would be with 1958's *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* with which Harryhausen would again change the game. With black and white movies now being phased out for the new fad of "colour" films, Harryhausen's work on *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* saw him experimenting with colour stock in order to overcome the heavy colour balance issues of the films of that time. Long-time Harryhausen producer and partner Charles H. Schneer (whom he'd first worked with on *It Came from Beneath the Sea*) would label this Dynamation, with the technique later becoming known as SuperDynaMation and Dynarama. As well as this, the film is fondly remembered for a brilliant fight scene between the titular Sinbad and a no-good stop-motion skeleton. Another feather in the cap of the film is that *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* was also the highest grossing film of the summer of 1958 (not to be confused with Bryan Adams' '69 – changing the lyrics sadly doesn't work, trust us we've tried). Harryhausen even helped pen some of the screenplay for the film, although his writing work officially went uncredited.

The 1960s would again see Harryhausen make impressive strides, this time with the fantasy duo of 1960's *The Three Worlds of Gulliver* and 1961's *Mysterious Island*. But it was his next movie for which Ray Harryhausen would cement his legacy and arguably be most fondly remembered for. Yes, it's *that* one: *Jason and the Argonauts*. What was seen and loved in *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*, as in the famed skeleton fight, was taken to a new level with *Jason* as Harryhausen's craft brought to life an iconic battle between three actors and seven stop-motion skeletons.

According to all accounts, this sequence alone took four whole months to do. The only massive disappointment about all of this, though, is that *Jason*, as well as *The Three Worlds of Gulliver* and *Mysterious Island*, proved to be a bit of a flop at the box office upon its initial release. These films were followed by a 1964 adaptation of H.G. Wells' *First Men in the Moon*, which again disappointed at the box office. More notable about *First Men in the Moon* is that it was the one and only time that Harryhausen made a film in the 2.35:1 widescreen format.

Whilst so much of Harryhausen's work wowed viewers and audiences back then and in decades since, the 1960s was generally not a kind decade for the legendary animation and effects wizard. One of the main problems seemed to be the time setting of Ray's work, mixed along with the uprising of 1960s counter-culture. The cool kids were all hip, swinging and progressive, whereas Harryhausen's films were all set in older, often more mythical times of centuries past. As such, Ray Harryhausen's work struggled to be appealing to the changing outlook of 1960s audiences who were becoming adjusted to a new breed of filmmakers and storytellers led by the likes of Mike Nichols, John Schlesinger, Warren Beatty and Dennis Hopper. This would lead to Columbia Pictures, with whom Harryhausen had worked on so many features for, not renewing their contract with Ray, letting him essentially become a free agent.

Returning to Sinbad and Clashing with Titans

After leaving Columbia, Ray Harryhausen would end up being brought in by Hammer Film Productions to work on so many of the features that you've seen elsewhere in the pages of this fine magazine this month. Like this issue of your beloved STARBURST, dinosaurs were the order of the day! For Hammer Films, Harryhausen would work on the dino-heavy *One Million Years B.C.* (1966) and for Warners, 1969's *The Valley of Gwangi*. After this duo of films went down well with audiences, the 1970s would lead to Harryhausen, along with Charles Schneer, approaching Columbia Pictures with the idea of revisiting an old favourite: Sinbad.

With *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, directed by Gordon Hessler, the long-standing Sinbad character was brought back and refreshed in order to make a mark on both those familiar with him and on a new generation of fans. The film would initially be released in late 1973 in some regions, although it was released on a larger scale throughout the middle of 1974. Another piece of famed Harryhausen work would be present, this time in the form of a remarkably impressive sword fight with the six-armed goddess known as Kali. So well received was the film, a follow-up arrived in 1977, *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*. Despite Harryhausen's deep involvement once more, this outing for Sinbad wasn't received anywhere near as well as his previous trips in terms of critical acclaim, largely down to the nearly spoof-ish nature of the film, although the box office numbers remained decent enough.

Following the returns to Sinbad, another one of Ray Harryhausen's finest hours would be up next, although we'd have to wait until 1981 to see it. Much like his *Jason and the Argonauts* work, Harryhausen is best known to most for

his unforgettable work on Desmond Davis' *Clash of the Titans* for MGM. With an all-star cast made up of the likes of Harry Hamlin, Laurence Olivier, Burgess Meredith, Ursula Andress and Judi Bowker, *Clash of the Titans* was the biggest budgeted film that Ray Harryhausen would ever work on. It would also wind up being the last feature film that involved his animation talents. Of course, there were monumental moments aplenty throughout the film's running time, not least the iconic Harryhausen-created Kraken and serpent-haired Medusa.

Clash of the Titans would see Ray Harryhausen nominated for a Saturn Award for Best Special Effects, but awards and recognition were something that so often sadly alluded this legendary and hugely influential talent. Despite the films he'd worked on and the wonders he had crafted, there was distinct lack of interest from Hollywood when it came to giving Ray the trinkets that he so deserved. Throughout his working life, criminally not one of the films that Ray Harryhausen worked on was ever nominated for any sort of special effects Oscar, which is absolutely baffling when you consider the magnitude, reach and inventiveness of his skills. The general consensus on this, as even noted by the man himself, is that Harryhausen was shunned because he had spent the majority of his working career living and operating outside of the Hollywood bubble, having lived in London from 1960 until his death in 2013. He did finally receive an honorary Oscar for his achievements in 1992.

And so it would be, *Clash of the Titans* would prove to be Harryhausen's last feature film, with several studios deciding to take a pass on a proposed sequel dubbed *Force of the Trojans* (it seriously cannot have been any worse than the more recent *Wrath of the Titans* follow-up to the *Clash* redo, right?). The struggle to find a home for this sequel was the final nail in the coffin for Ray, with both he and long-time partner Charles Schneer retiring from the world of filmmaking.

In the years since *Clash of the Titans*, Harryhausen released several books, had a few film cameos here and there (such as the *Mighty Joe Young* remake and even the Will Ferrell-starring *Elf*), was the focus of many books and documentaries, and was given plenty of recognition from fans and long-time admirers of his work, heralded as a truly pioneering talent who helped to advance filmmaking in his particular field like rarely any other. But his last work of real note would come in 2002 with *The Story of the Tortoise and the Hare*. This was the final part of the fairytale stories that Ray Harryhausen began back in his early days, with work actually first beginning on this particular part back in 1952. With the help of animators Mark Caballero and Seamus Walsh, Ray would finally see *The Story of the Tortoise and the Hare* finished in 2002, even managing to get the film finished by using the refurbished original puppets used back in the early '50s.

After finishing *The Story of the Tortoise and the Hare*, Ray Harryhausen would see out the rest of his days in peace, with his timeless work still inspiring new generations even to this day. Whilst the man may be gone, his work and his presence, and more importantly the memories that he gave to so many, will be with us always.

TYRANNOSAURUS SEX

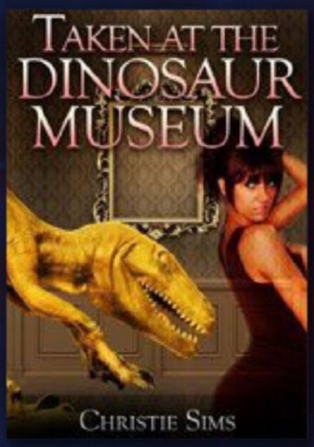
Words: Ed Fortune

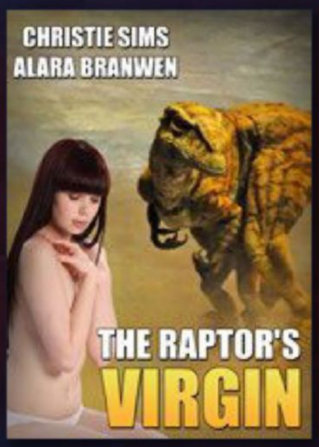
If you thought JURASSIC PARK was pure fantasy, you haven't delved deep enough into the weird world of fiction. Join us as we go under the covers with a pair of writers who produce prehist-erotic literature eBooks...

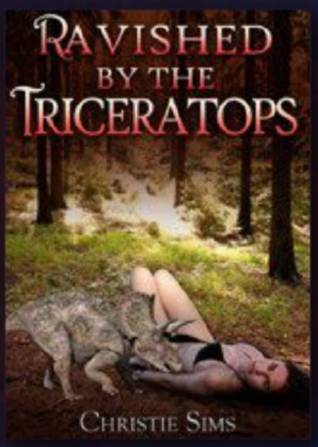
Alara Branwen and Christie Sims are world famous for creating erotic fiction about beautiful women having intimate moments with giant lizards. We were curious to find out more about this very lucrative market.

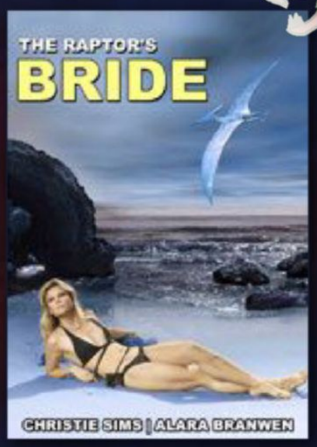
STARBURST: Why dinosaur erotica?
Alara Branwen: We actually just started writing dinosaur erotica on a whim. I was taking a walk one day and started thinking about the movie *Jurassic Park*. Then it just all came together. I thought the idea of writing dinosaur erotica was dumb at first but then I thought, "*Well what the hell, I write every other weird thing, why not this?*" So I wrote the first of many dinosaur erotica stories. I never expected them to take off like they did.

Are you the only people doing this?
Actually no, there are several people doing it.









There aren't as many as there were when it was a big fad but there are still a few. Believe it or not, most of the people that are doing it do it as a hobby because they enjoy it. But as far as inventing it, goodness no. People have been making porno that includes dinosaurs and people for several years.

Why do you think people are so taken with the idea of lusty dinosaurs?
I think it has to do with our inherent sexual makeup as people. We love the idea of big, powerful males taking smaller females. Since the dinosaurs in the stories are big and powerful and the women are well, your typical women (strong-willed women, but still women). There is also the exotic factor that excites people as well.

How do you work out the mechanics?
Honestly we just imagine a human male having sex with a human female and write the scene. Next we imagine the scene as a dinosaur having sex with the female and change the scene as appropriate. It's a strange way to do things but it works for us!

Which work are you the proudest of?
In relation to dinosaur erotica, *Taken by the T-Rex*. That one was our favourite because we could incorporate elements of speculative fiction into it. The work that we are the most proud of overall is *Sold to the Dragon;* we feel that was the best story we have ever done.

What have you got planned next?
We have many different works planned in many different genres. We have branched out under several different pen names and are writing several types of stories. We are still doing monster erotica, but we are also doing gay shifter stories, shifter romances, and other niche genre stories, whose niches we feel are not being filled by contemporary erotica writers.

And are the pair of you working on any more dino books?
We haven't released any dinosaur stories in a while but we have a few finished. We just haven't gotten around to editing them. We also have more in the works as well. Christie and I write several different stories at a time (usually finishing many a week) so it's sometimes hard to tell how many we are going to have. However, we have at least ten so far in that genre.

If you could only have one book for company what would it be?
Any book by Terry Pratchett, Douglas Adams, or R. A. Salvatore.

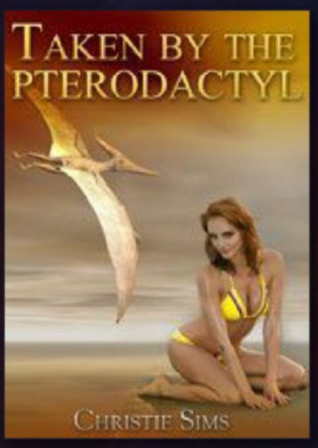
What advice do you have for those looking to get into writing?
Well, do your research on Amazon to see if what you want to write is popular! It sounds terrible, but that is part of what makes a successful indie author. Do your research, make sure you have a little money set aside or have the skills to do all of the things you need to do (make book covers etc.) and then once you have a firm foundation and a good knowledge of what you decide on writing, write it!

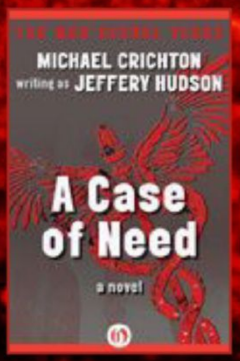
Do you plan on inventing any new genres?
Well, reinventing the wheel is hard and usually comes by accident. At least, this dinosaur thing did (not that we invented it). But we will certainly try to bring new things to the erotica arena every time we write.

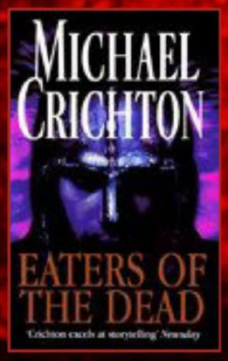
The most important thing you need to do something like this is a great imagination. You need a good imagination to write anything. If you don't, then how will your readers ever get a rich experience from reading your work? Humour is important in all things. Even if your work is tragic, you have to have a good sense of humour about it and keep it in perspective. Otherwise the entire writing process will drag you down.

If you had to choose truth or beauty, which would it be?
Truth. I'd rather be ugly as sin and know the truth about everything than to simply be pretty.

You can find the erotic dinosaur fiction of ALARA BRANWEN and CHRISTIE SIMS on Amazon – be warned, it's adults only!

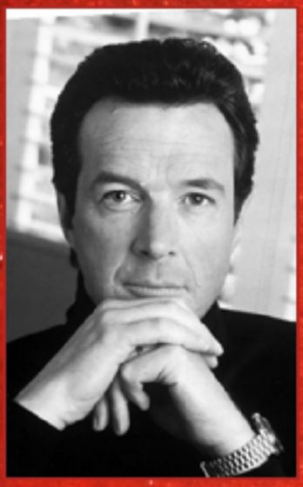






The CRICHTON FACTOR

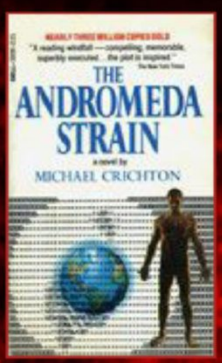
by Ed Fortune

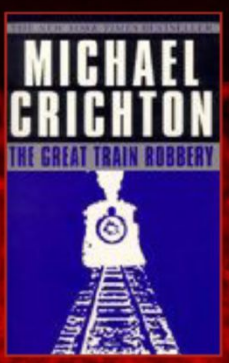


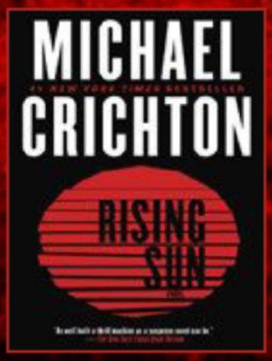
Michael Crichton is a name which is instantly recognisable to fans of cult entertainment. Books such as *Jurassic Park*, *The Lost World*, *Congo* and *Sphere* are frequently found in a word nerd's library...

The Harvard Medical School graduate produced over 30 books, mostly fiction, during his lifetime. He wrote and directed movies such as *Westworld*, *Looker* and *Runaway* and was responsible for the TV series *ER*. He has the unique distinction of being the only person to 'hat-trick' the American media top-ten billboards. The movie of *Jurrasic Park*, an episode of *ER* and his novel *Disclosure* all topped the charts in the same week.

His first works came out under the pen name John Lange; Crichton was training to be a Doctor at the time and thus used a pseudonym to protect his reputation. The earlier books contain all the elements that we would get to know and love; advanced technology being used in relatively sinister ways, the liberal use of quotes from famous people and strong 'thriller' elements. You can easily see why Crichton used a false name at the start. These fledgling works aren't that violent but they are written for the hard-crime market and are quite saucy. Though nothing terribly shocking by today's standards and quite awkward in key places, these books aren't that great. It was at this time that Crichton dipped his toe into controversy. Using another false name, that of Jeffrey Hudson, the







book *A Case of Need* tackles the issue of abortion. It was later turned into a movie, *The Carey Treatment*, which goes to show just how good Crichton was at writing work that attracted commercial interest.

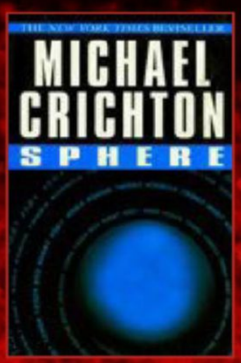
The Andromeda Strain was the first book published under Crichton's own name, and early reviews remark on his staggering debut. Inspired by Len Deighton's *The Ipcress File*, it's the tale of an extraterrestrial microorganism that comes to Earth, driving people insane then mutating into something even more sinister. Published in 1969, it's a classic piece of horror sci-fi from that time. Crichton takes an idea that up to that point had only been seen in scary B-movies and turns it into a tight thriller. It would be made into a movie in 1971 and the story, along with the likes of *Quatermass and The Pit*, is used as a template as to how to create slow burn sci-fi thrillers.

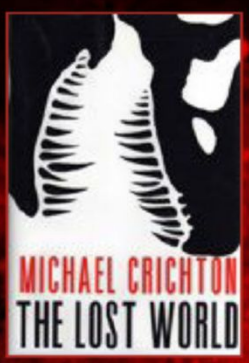
Despite the runaway success of *The Andromeda Strain*, Crichton continued to play it safe, releasing further thrillers under the name of John Lange. The thriller aspects improve at this point; there is less smut and more action throughout. This practice ended in part due to the book *Binary*. TV station ABC wanted to turn it into a 'movie of the week', and Crichton insisted that he be allowed to direct. The result was *Pursuit*, a lacklustre but entirely competent thriller that was much scarier than it should have been. The network loved it and the piece became a calling card for Crichton, who no longer needed the security of a separate identity. He was commissioned to write another techno-thriller piece: *Extreme Close-Up*. This 1973 movie had Crichton's name splashed all over it, which is a bit of pity because it's rather lurid. The plot revolves around a world in which everyone has access to surveillance technologies and we have all become Peeping Toms. Though ahead of its time, in the days of internet pornography *Extreme Close-Up* seems rather quaint. The work on the script and the ideas explored did set things up for something much better, however.

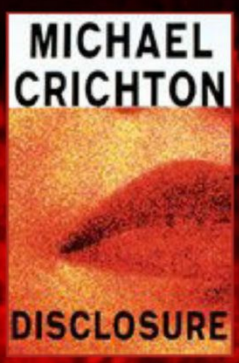
Westworld was written and directed by Crichton, when he was at the height of his skills, and more details on that seminal piece of cinema can be found on page 42 of this issue. The success of *Westworld* would make Crichton the Hollywood go-to guy for haunting movies with a sci-fi twist. Fantastic but horrible things that seemed likely to happen would become the author's signature. This is probably why he was asked to direct and adapt Robin Cook's medical thriller *Coma*, a movie about black-market organ trading. The scenes of comatose bodies being hung like meat in a vast warehouse are particularly haunting and the image has been reused in many a movie and thriller since.

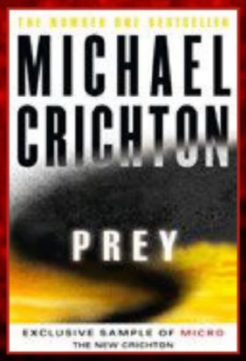
On a roll, Crichton would write the novel and then the screenplay for *The Great Train Robbery*, which he also directed. Though a flat out crime novel set in the Victorian period, it's fast pace and cast make it of interest to fans of cult films. Arguably one of the few features in which Sean Connery actually expands his acting range, it's an entertaining and amsuing heist movie. The novel is quite different; Crichton played it very straight in the book whereas the Hollywood version is silly and whimsical in places. This was entirely deliberate (the studio wanted more 'farce-like' elements) and has also lead to it becoming a bit of a hit amongst the steampunk crowd.

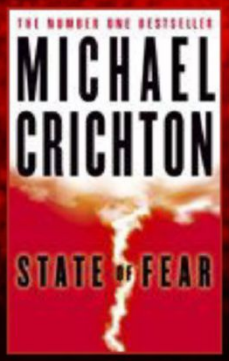
Crichton's next book, the spectacularly titled *Eaters of the Dead: The Manuscript of Ibn Fadlan Relating His Experiences with the Northmen in A.D. 922*, is unusual in that it didn't immediately get adapted into a feature film. The utterly ridiculous name gives you some idea as to how formidable the author had become at this point. He was a guaranteed bestseller and given free rein to do whatever he liked. It's the tale of a 10th century Arab traveller who joins a team of Viking warriors to fight mist-monsters. It's also told from the perspective of a modern academic; the story is meant to be one that has been recovered by historians and re-translated and re-written multiple times. It hit a critical brick wall at the time and wasn't the amazing hit the publishers hoped for. Crichton planned to direct the movie version in 1979 via Orion Pictures, but producers pulled out after an initial script failed to inspire confidence. Twenty years later, it would be turned into 1999's *The Thirteenth Warrior*. Despite an earnest yet scenery chewing performance from

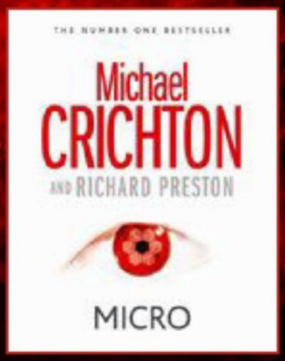












Antonio Banderas, it was a critical and commercial flop.

This would mark a slight decline for Crichton. Between 1981 and 1989 he would direct three thrillers. Looker was a return to the themes of voyeurism found in *Extreme Close-Up*, but with added commentary on the media marketing industry and plastic surgery. *Runaway* was a fun techno-thriller featuring crazy machines that was reminiscent of *Westworld*, and *Physical Evidence* was a feeble thriller that went nowhere, did very little and seemed to bore everyone involved from the audience to the cast. It would be the last feature Crichton would direct.

Luckily for us, this meant he would go on to work on other, more interesting projects, including a whole pile of books, including *Congo*, *Sphere* and, of course, *Jurassic Park*.

1980's *Congo* would drain much of Crichton's time. Inspired by Henry Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, the book is a shaggy dog tale of white explorers going into the jungle to find buried treasure and lost cities. They are beset by killer gorillas and criminal elements, whilst racing against other teams of explorers. Crichton would try and get this novel turned into a movie. Alas, *King Solomon's Mines* is one of those projects that way too many people want to make, so nothing gets done. *Congo* was pitched as a version of the classic story, so it swiftly fell into development hell. Crichton would take this story and turn it into the much overlooked interactive fiction/adventure video game *Amazon*. Hollywood eventually adapted the book. Maybe due to unforgettable performances from Tim Curry and Ernie Hudson, 1995's *Congo* was a critical failure but a box office smash.

1987's novel, *Sphere*, was a critical success and went down well with fans of first contact science fiction. Despite being predictable, it's a rather compelling tale of people dealing with the impossible and being frail and flawed. Originally envisioned as a sequel to *The Andromeda Strain*, it's nothing of the sort, being an accomplished piece of character-driven fiction instead.

It is 1990's *Jurassic Park* and 1995's *The Lost World* for which Crichton is best known, of course. Both books were combined into one volume; *Jurassic World*. The tale of science gone wrong, powered by human hubris and greed, plays to the author's strengths. Crichton clearly cherry picks his favourite bits from his other works (especially *Congo*) and the result was a record-making bestseller. *The Lost World* is the only sequel he ever wrote, and it shows; all the best bits are in the first book. Still, it's a classic for good reason.

Between these two books, Crichton would produce two thrillers; *Rising Sun* and *Disclosure*. Both are updates of his earlier work, and *Disclosure* would be turned into an equally boring thriller featuring Michael Douglas as an unlikely victim of sexual harassment. *Airframe*, the book written after *The Lost World*, suffers from a similar fate; it's a dull thriller about an airplane disaster. Despite claims that it would be too expensive to film, the main reason it has never been optioned is because Hollywood grew bored of airplane disaster movies long ago.

Crichton would attempt to recapture the buzz of *Jurassic Park* in his later work; *Timeline*, *Prey* and *Next* all use novel sci-fi premises, from transgenic animals to time travel, to create a similar roller coaster to *Jurassic Park*. This later period is very much a return to form, only slightly marred by the posturing climate change bore-fest which is *State of Fear*. It's frequently described as a great novel buried in platitudes and bad science.

His last two books, *Pirate Latitudes* and *Micro*, were published after his death in 2008. The former is an action thriller set in a tropical paradise. It's *Jurassic Park* without the dinosaurs, and yet it works. *Micro* was an unfinished manuscript adapted by the publisher. It returns to all of Crichton's greatest themes: the struggle of man versus science, a growing surveillance culture and the hubris of man.

Michael Crichton's legacy is one of proving that even the most ridiculous piece of science fiction is a bankable and filmable idea. His unique talent was to skilfully take popular ideas and blend them with high concept work to create something everyone can enjoy.

COMING OUT OF HYPERSPACE

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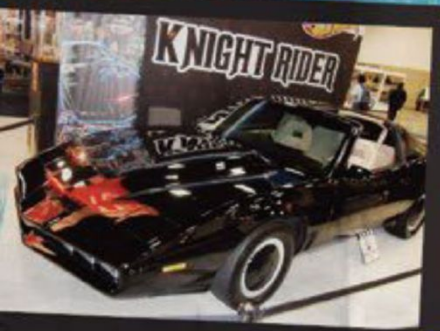

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boy, have we got a vacation for you...

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"All of these parks feature fully compliant androids that you either have sex with or murder."

STARBURST packs its bags for a nice relaxing break in a resort that offers robot fantasy interaction. What could possibly go wrong? The destination? WESTWORLD...

Jurassic Park is not the only Michael Crichton story about a theme park gone horribly wrong that got made into a movie. In 1973, he wrote and directed science fiction/disaster movie *Westworld,* a tale of a futuristic holiday destination in which life-like androids were used to allow human beings to indulge in all sorts of fantasies

The plot for the movie is fantastic and quite clever. Delos is a park with three themed areas; Medieval World (medieval Europe), Roman World (the pre-Christian city of Pompeii) and, of course, West World. The three periods in history are clearly chosen for the way that we've romanticised them, but Delos has pared it down to the grittier parts of the human experience. All of these parks feature fully compliant androids that you either have sex with or murder. Delos' tagline in its advertising promises "*Have we got a vacation for you*!" They certainly have. One that ends in disaster.

We follow two tourists, Peter and John, who have come to West World for a spot of guilt-free mayhem. After flirting with the machines for a while, the two get into a fight with a steely-eyed android. Safe in the knowledge that their guns have been specially designed to only work on machines, the pair take out a black-hatted gunslinger, played by Yul Brynner.

Much like *Jurassic Park,* the movie starts off with the main characters being amazed by the technology and having a great time. As an audience, we know trouble is coming; the technicians admit they don't really understand how the androids work (they were designed by computer) and solid guarantees are given that everything is completely safe (always a bad sign). Inevitably, a computer virus (though it's not called that in the movie) corrupts the robots.

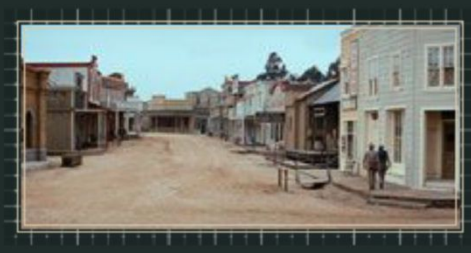
Slowly but surely, the machines rebel, ending in the murder of most of the tourists and the staff. The latter part of the movie dips into survival horror with Peter running around while pursued by the gunslinger. Brynner's performance as an implacable killing machine has been frequently quoted and referenced since the movie's début. The digital readouts and emotionless responses from the gunslinger (including the eerie and unnatural repetition of key phrases) would go on to inspire the design of Arnold Schwarzenegger's titular *Terminator*. Heck, it even has heat vision (like the creature from *Predator*). Brynner's slow-moving performance also inspired the character of Michael Myers in *Halloween.* Or to put it another way, a lot of Hollywood horror was inspired by this movie.

It's worth noting that Brynner was well known for his role as the cowboy in *The Magnificent Seven;* to many, he looked like a classic Hollywood cowboy because he was exactly that. This made him all the more frightening. Added to this is the way that all the androids have cold-looking eyes and remain perfectly still when they aren't interacting with people. The result is something astoundingly creepy and shows that we understood the concept of the uncanny valley years before we had a word for it.

Arguably, *Westworld* is *Jurassic Park* with a lower budget and a darker script, but despite the similar plots, they're very different. *Jurassic Park* is about mankind getting carried away with its own cleverness and failing to recognise that it can't control all the possible variables, especially when nature is involved. *Westworld* is about human excess; when the movie begins people have enslaved creatures that can feel emotion and pain for their own entertainment. Though both features are about hubris and the lack of self-control, only one of these movies makes us ponder the evil that lies in the heart of every man.

The science is also better in *Westworld* because it only exists to drive the plot forward. Unlike *Jurassic Park's* DNA hokum, the script doesn't pretend to know how a life-like robot would work. The scientists pretty much exist to explain the rules of the theme park and then be surprised when these rules are broken. *Westworld* is also much tighter than the dinosaur movie. It comes in at just under 90 minutes and gets the job done in short order. Part thriller, part sci-fi horror and part western, it laid much of the groundwork for some of the most memorable movies of the eighties and nineties.

Crichton would go on to write many great novels, several of which explored human hubris. He was also behind some of the more exciting and memorable sci-fi thrillers of the seventies and eighties. He was responsible for *Looker,* a murder mystery about a sinister media empire which used technology



to create the perfect model and he also wrote and directed *Runaway,* the Tom Selleck movie about domestic robots running amok. Though neither of these movies quite achieved the same cultural weight as *Westworld,* they're both jolly interesting. *Looker* still stands up well as a commentary on the nature of the beauty industry (though it isn't particularly a great movie) and *Runaway* forms the template for many 'robots gone mad' type features, from *Short Circuit* to *I, Robot.*

The sequel, *Futureworld*, was neither directed nor written by Crichton nor did it have the same sort of strong and iconic casting. Instead, it was a dreary shaggy dog story about a new themed section (called Future World) which had robot boxing and simulated zero-g environments. Much of the action took place seemingly off-camera and centred on a very poorly thought-out world domination plan involving clones and robots. It received a lukewarm reception at the box office and was mostly ignored by the critics. Its only distinction is that it was one of the first modern American movies to be shown in China. Moving the action away from West World proved disastrous, though that didn't stop them from attempting to make TV series out of it.

All told, *Westworld* is a pretty significant movie. Putting *Jurassic Park* to one side for the moment, the key appeal of *Westworld* is its fabulous idea and storytelling. It's continued to capture Hollywood's imagination to this day, and its influences can be seen in everything from Joss Whedon's *Dollhouse* to the recent Bruce Willis action movie *Vice.*

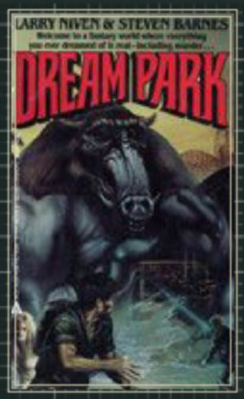
Westworld the Series

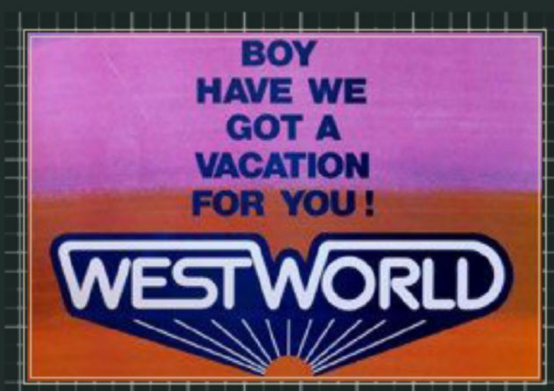
The success of the movie not only led to a sequel, but also allowed a very short-lived 1980 TV series called *Beyond Westworld.* Five episodes were commissioned, but only three were aired. The show was very much a product of the eighties and the premise centered on the robots from West World being used in some sort of evil world domination plot. The show was crap and canned very quickly. Collectors can get the whole thing via special order on the Warner Brothers website.

Despite this failed attempt, it hasn't stopped HBO from giving a *Westworld* TV series a go. The show will tell the same story as the movie, at least at the start. Since the movie is over 40 years old, it's quite wise to tell the tale from the beginning. Production is being handled by Bad Robot Productions, the company owned by J.J. Abrams and Bryan Burk, both of whom have been working on the recent *Star Wars* movie. Jonathan Nolan, who is best known for his TV show *Person of Interest,* has directed the pilot and is listed as the show's creator. (Nolan, of course, has also worked on the recent *Batman* movies with his brother, Christopher.)

One of the show's innovations is that the various android characters can be reprogrammed with new personalities. This premise allows for a wide range of acting challenges and has attracted a large amount of talent to the show. Evan Rachel Wood is set to play one such robot, and we already know that identity will be a key theme of the series. Anthony Hopkins has been cast as Doctor Ford, the brilliant director of West World, and Ed Harris will be the Man in Black (the role performed by Yul Brynner in the movie). The cast have signed multi-year deals, and Nolan has a good track record for creating complex multi-season arc plots. As the title suggests, the story will be mostly about the Wild West aspect of the theme park, but it's possible we'll see scenes set in Medieval and Roman World as well.

As this is an HBO show, we're going to wildly speculate that there is going to be a high amount of nudity with this one. The broader cast list contains a reasonable number of actors who are not strangers to getting their kit off. Given that the original movie was also quite violent, we should expect plenty of *Game of Thrones*-style gore, and the buzz is that this will be HBO's





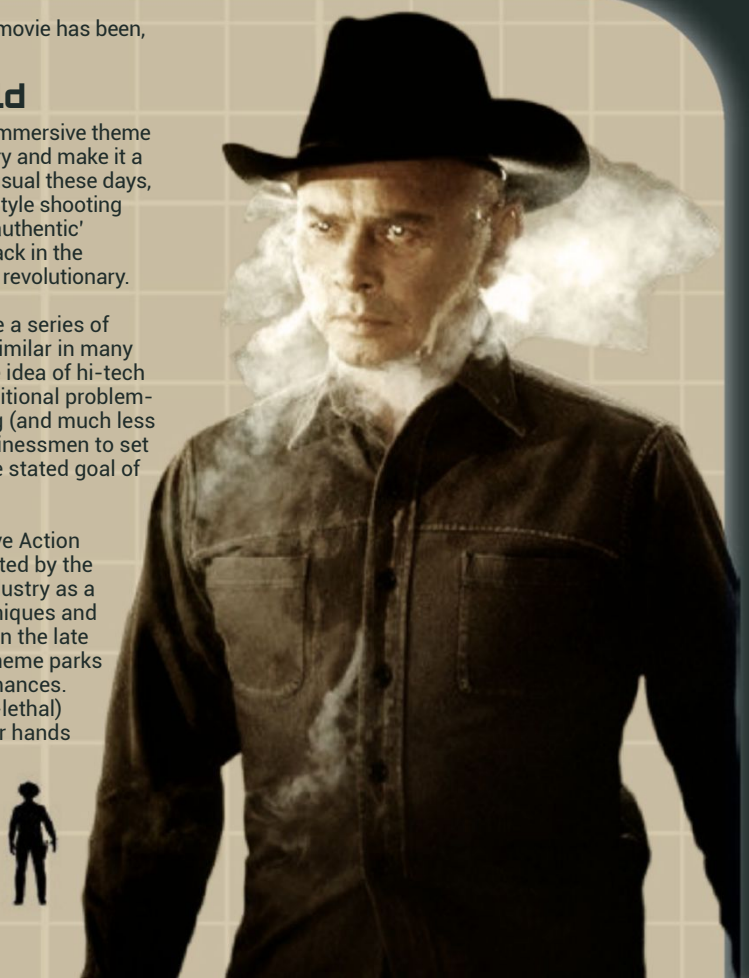
next big thing. Given how influential the movie has been, this could be very good.

Real World Westworld

Crichton didn't invent the idea of an all-immersive theme park, but he did inspire many people to try and make it a reality. Wild West theme parks aren't unusual these days, and no one bats an eyelid at Wild West-style shooting experiences. Hiring actors to create an 'authentic' experience is pretty standard now, but back in the seventies and eighties, it was somewhat revolutionary.

Back in 1981, Larry Niven began to write a series of books set in a site called *Dream Park.* Similar in many ways to *Westworld,* Niven combined the idea of hi-tech park rides and machines with more traditional problem-solving games to tell a series of exciting (and much less violent) stories. The books inspired businessmen to set up the *Dream Park Corporation,* with the stated goal of creating a real-world theme park.

Alas, all they really did was re-invent Live Action Role Play. Some of the innovations created by the company were adopted by the LARP industry as a whole (mostly event management techniques and the like), but the corporation went bust in the late nineties. The focus moved away from theme parks and into small venues and fixed performances. The closest thing you can get to a (non-lethal) *Westworld* experience now is to get your hands on tickets to promenade theatre events created by theatrical outfits such as *Punchdrunk* and *Difference Engine,* and the last time we looked, neither of them had anyone who looks like Yul Brynner on the books.



"Crichton didn't invent the idea of an all-immersive theme park, but he did inspire many people to try and make it a reality."

PARTNERS IN TIME

by Kieron Moore

TRAVEL BACK WITH US TO 2012 AS WE RE-VISIT SAFETY NOT GUARANTEED, THE FANTASTIC, UNDERAPPRECIATED DEBUT FEATURE OF JURASSIC WORLD'S COLIN TREVORROW

"Wanted: Somebody to go back in time with me. This is not a joke. P.O. Box 91 Ocean View, WA 99393. You'll get paid after we get back. Must bring your own weapons. Safety not guaranteed. I have only done this once before."

So said a classified ad in *Backwoods Home Magazine*, September 1997. You may be disappointed (if not surprised) to hear that the ad wasn't placed by a genuine time traveller; rather, it was mocked up by one of the magazine's writers, John Silveira, to fill unused space at the last minute, along with a personal ad looking for a girlfriend. Thanks to the ad building up international media attention, including an appearance on Jay Leno's *Tonight Show*, Silveira received thousands of replies – and, almost twenty years later, they haven't stopped coming. Though some were from the kind of people who described the weapons they'd bring along in worrying detail, Silveira was touched by the number of replies from people who, though perhaps understanding that the ad was probably a hoax, desperately wanted it to be true so they could change something about their past, including several from prisoners who wanted to talk their younger selves out of committing their crime or from people wanting to save loved ones from tragic deaths. Oh, and if you're wondering, he got five replies to the girlfriend ad, one of which was from a man.

Silveira's ad also inspired Colin Trevorrow's 2012 feature debut *Safety Not Guaranteed*. Aubrey Plaza (*Parks and Recreation*) plays Darius, an intern at a Seattle magazine, who is picked to go along with self-serving reporter Jeff (Jake Johnson) and fellow intern Arnau (Karan Soni) to investigate the appearance of a very similar classified. They're expecting to track the ad to a prankster, or to write a comic exposé of a delusional weirdo, but what they find is much more meaningful.

It doesn't take long for the team (well, mainly Darius) to find the man who placed the ad – Kenneth (Mark Duplass). Kenneth rejects Jeff's application when it's clear the reporter's not taking the whole time travel thing seriously. Darius steps up to the mark and immediately makes a connection with the secretive grocery store employee. But Kenneth can't immediately trust her – he does believe the government is following him, after all. Their bond as time travelling companions is sealed in a heart-breaking scene in which she reveals her reason for wanting to turn back the years is to save her mother, whose death she blames herself for – a true story which she keeps secret from her colleagues.

Kenneth soon admits that his own motivation is to save a girl he used to love, and their mutual honesty allows the bond between him and Darius to grow stronger. Meanwhile, Jeff's following up his own past, with a motivation surprisingly similar to Kenneth's – he only took this job so he could visit an old girlfriend who lives in Kenneth's town. His attempt to rekindle this romance is his own form of time travel, a desperate need to revive happier times. When this falls apart, he helps socially awkward

TREVORROW'S WORLD

It was only three years ago that *Safety Not Guaranteed*, Colin Trevorrow's modestly-budgeted debut feature, was released, and yet he's the man behind one of this summer's biggest blockbusters. Just who is he, how did he get here, and what's next?

Trevorrow directed his first short film, sex comedy *Home Base*, in 2002; check it out online (anyone who's ever made an amateurish and puerile student film will be pleased to know that the *Jurassic World* director has too). He continued working as a screenwriter, taking one of three writing credits on indie comedy *Making Revolution* in 2003 and selling spec script *Tester* to DreamWorks in 2006. He then teamed up with old university buddy Derek Connolly to write as-yet-unproduced buddy cop movie *Cocked and Loaded*. The two of them worked well together and decided to keep at it as a writing team.

After the success of *Safety Not Guaranteed*, including Independent Spirit Awards and Sundance Film Festival wins for Connolly's script, the duo got the attention of the Walt Disney Company, who hired them to rewrite 1986 sci-fi comedy *Flight of the Navigator* (this remake hasn't landed yet, though). There were then some false rumours about Trevorrow directing *Star Wars Episode VII* before he was finally announced as the director of *Jurassic World*, with Connolly helping him out on the script.

Whether *Jurassic World* is a hit or not, Trevorrow already has a couple more projects lined up. Later this year, he'll direct *Book of Henry*, from an original script by Gregg Hurwitz. Then he'll shoot *Intelligent Life*, a sci-fi thriller he co-wrote with Connolly. Unfortunately, there are no plot details regarding either of those available at the moment – so take the titles and speculate away!

Along with Gareth Edwards and Duncan Jones, Colin Trevorrow is part of a new generation of sci-fi and fantasy filmmakers who cut their teeth on cheap but character-rich genre movies and are now playing with the big toys – and we at STARBURST can't wait to see what he does with them next.

intern Arnau party hard and meet local girls, so he doesn't waste his youth and end up similarly full of regret.

Of course, things get more complicated. Darius starts to worry when Kenneth makes her help steal scientific supplies, and some research reveals that the wannabe time-traveller may not have been entirely truthful about his past. Things only get weirder as two men in long coats start asking questions and Kenneth's 'time machine' nears completion. Part of the joy of *Safety Not Guaranteed* is the ambiguity surrounding Kenneth's true nature, and in that spirit, we won't discuss the ending further and will let you discover its surprises for yourselves.

But the real joy of this movie lies not in the mechanics of time travel, which are largely irrelevant, but in its characters and what they say about our relationship with our own memories. As Silveira discovered, people don't really want to travel back in time to ride alongside dinosaurs or to prevent the rise of Skynet; we want to say the goodbyes we never got the chance to say or to have another shot at relationships we fucked up – and this is what *Safety Not Guaranteed* is really about. It's her honesty about this that allows Darius to be accepted by Kenneth, whereas Jeff's dishonesty led to rejection.

The exploration of this theme is touching, thanks to Derek Connolly's witty and heartfelt script. All of the characters are, in one way or another, outsiders, and there's a strong sense that the writer understands what that feels like; Kenneth was bullied for playing with *Star Wars* figures rather than other kids, Arnau is similarly glued to his computer and doesn't know how to talk to girls, and an opening monologue reveals that Darius always felt like the odd one out growing up (before a very funny gag subverting the cliché of opening monologues). Importantly, Connolly's script never mocks the characters for their shortcomings; rather, it portrays them all sympathetically, exposing the sadness of being an outsider while allowing them to find some degree of happiness in their journey together. Darius in particular is impossible to dislike, thanks to Aubrey Plaza's performance, her seemingly ironic demeanour hiding her troubles, her coy smile utterly charming.

Fans often call Shane Carruth's *Primer* the 'realistic' time travel movie, but *Safety Not Guaranteed* achieves an arguably greater feat by tapping into the fundamental human need to revisit the past and in doing so, feeling emotionally real. It's a really stunning piece of indie filmmaking that can't help but provoke tears and smiles in equal measure. If Trevorrow can keep up the quality as he deals with a bigger budget and make *Jurassic World* half as good, we're in for a treat this summer.

ALL THE NEWS FROM THE WORLDS OF DOCTOR WHO WITH PAUL MOUNT

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Series Nine

Location filming for Series Nine two-parter **The Girl Who Died** (by Steven Moffat and Jamie Mathieson) and **The Woman Who Lived** (by Catherine Tregenna) concluded late last month at the medieval village reconstruction at Cosmeston, just outside Cardiff. The episodes, whose guest cast includes Maisie Williams (**Game of Thrones**) and comedian/actor Rufus Hound (now confirmed as playing a character named Sam Swift) features a new monster initially teased by an official BBC image showing a glowing-eyed creature in the dark before being fully revealed in an on-set photograph as the new costume made its debut on location. The episodes, directed by Ed Bazalgette, also feature character actor David Schofield whose previous screen appearances include **Merlin**, **Our Friends in the North** and **The Shadow Line** and his well-remembered role as one of the wolf-wary regulars in 'The Slaughtered Lamb' in 1981's classic **An American Werewolf in London**. Schofield, replacing Brian Blessed who was forced to drop out of the role due to illness, will be appearing as 'Odin' in the episodes which, as we revealed last month, are set during the time of the Vikings. **Doctor Who** returns to BBC One in the UK and BBC America in the USA in the autumn.

DOCTOR WHO Goes to India

The TARDIS has landed on Indian TV with all eight series produced by BBC Wales since 2005 arriving this month on the country's FX Channel. The series is expected to be available to a million homes in the country and Myleeta Saga of BBC Worldwide in India said of the deal: "*This partnership marks a milestone for us. It will be the first time Whovians in India will be able to participate in the global **Doctor Who** phenomenon. And it is also the first time we've concluded a major deal with STAR India. We've seen an increasing interest in British drama from our partners in the last 12 months or so. Viewers now recognise the originality of British drama, and this has caused a surge in interest in our drama series like **Doctor Who**. We are very glad to be working with STAR India to bring this very iconic series (including Series Nine, which is currently being filmed) to viewers in India.*" **Doctor Who** is now available in around two hundred territories worldwide and remains one of the BBC's international 'Super Brands'.

Music News

Silva Screen has just released a three-disc CD featuring music from the eighth series of **Doctor Who** composed, as ever, by Murray Gold. The collection includes the Series Eight arrangement of the iconic theme tune, cues from each of the episodes of the series, and disc three features a suite of music from the 2014 Christmas special **Last Christmas**. Not included in the release, however, is the jazzed-up version of Queen's **Don't Stop Me Now** performed by singer Foxes in the episode **Mummy on the Orient Express**. The set was released on May 18th in the UK and will be available from May 26th in the USA.

DOCTOR WHO BAFTA Win!

Doctor Who triumphed at the BAFTA Television Craft Awards on April 26th where Series Eight's FX team - Milk VFX, Real SFX and BBC Wales VFX - won the award for Best Special, Visual and Graphic Effects. Milk's CEO said: "*We are honoured to be recognised by the Academy for our work on **Doctor Who** for the second year in a row. For a company set to celebrate its second year in business at the beginning of June this is another fairy tale ending to the year for Milk! It is a privilege to work with Steven Moffat and the BBC Wales team on **Doctor Who** and provides us with an opportunity as VFX artists to help push the boundaries of what can be done visually on television.*"

In others awards news, popular listings magazine *Radio Times* is nominated for 'Magazine Cover of the Year' by the Professional Publishers Association for its cover introducing Peter Capaldi as the Twelfth Doctor coinciding with the transmission of the eighth series last autumn. The winner will be announced on July 8th.

Rex Robinson 1929-2015

British actor Rex Robinson, who appeared in three 'classic' **Doctor Who** serials directed by the late Lennie Mayne, passed away in April at the age of 89. Born in Derby in 1926, Rex Robinson appeared regularly on British television from the 1960s to the 1980s, notching up credits in series as diverse as **No Hiding Place**, **Softly, Softly**, **Callan**, and in British comedy classics such as **Only Fools and Horses**, **Are You Being Served?** and **Bread** and he also appeared on the big screen in **Superman IV: Quest For Peace**. In **Doctor Who**, he appeared as sceptical scientist Dr Tyler (no relation to Rose) in tenth anniversary serial **The Three Doctors** in 1973, a Peladonian miner with a badger strapped to his head in 1974's **Monster of Peladon** and as Dr Carter in the first two episodes of 1976's **The Hand of Fear** which saw the departure of Elisabeth Sladen's Sarah Jane Smith from the series. Rex is survived by his wife, actress Patricia Pryor who also appeared in **The Three Doctors**.

WATCHING DOCTOR WHO

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE WHONIVERSE BY JR SOUTHALL

The story of Donna Noble is a metaphor for growing up, and in some ways an analogy for the series itself. Catherine Tate's character begins very much self-centred and immature, and her travels in the TARDIS not only broaden her outlook, but also give her an understanding that the universe is made up of a vast variety of viewpoints, almost all of which enjoy some validity. It is the narrow-minded, the petty and the mean that she comes to see as the 'enemy', and this is very much the character she leaves behind having met the Doctor.

I was reminded of this when on a recent STARBURST Radio show Mike, the editor, talked about the recent Twitter kerfuffle over the so-called 'leprechaun child.' Kyra Pringle had posted a picture of her sick toddler, who at two years of age had already far outlived the predictions doctors had given her at birth. "That baby looks like a leprechaun (sic)" was just one of a deluge of comments demonstrating what a hideous, thoughtless place the Internet can be when people don't bother to consider the feelings of others when they hit the 'post' icon.

A few years ago, one particular *Doctor Who* forum included a thread about which dead actress to have played a companion of the Doctor was most deserving of a spot of necrophilia. It wasn't the least tasteful thing ever to have been posted about *Doctor Who* on an internet forum.

Doctor Who fandom is itself notorious for its perceived lack of empathy, although in truth it is probably no more notorious and no more guilty of this than any other fandom or gathering of like-minded people anywhere on the web. There will always be a tiny minority among any group that seeks to have their (often atypical) opinion become the prevailing one.

As Shakespeare once wrote, "The empty vessel makes the loudest sound," or rather – in what has become something of a cliché about internet etiquette – he who shouts the loudest is the one with the least to say. And while that might be true, it is equally true that those with the loudest voices are usually those with the greatest influence – in that, if nothing else, they are the ones who will be heard the most frequently and who give their opinions the most forceful representation.

Which is a long way from saying that those opinions are either correct or indeed prevalent, but that those holding them would like to think of them that way, or would like them to become as much. And as former American politician John Danforth said, "The loudest voices we hear are those who advocate conflict, divisiveness."

The number of voices calling for Steven Moffat's head, sometimes literally, in the last few years has been so far outweighed by the number of people who have just quietly got on with enjoying *Doctor Who;* it's odd that these people think they're in the majority – or even that they think by saying it often enough and forcefully enough they'll

be able to stop other people from enjoying the series. And yet rather than opening their minds to the possibility that we might just be in the middle of the programme's most enjoyable and imaginative period ever (which is not without its flaws – but then, what is?), and rather than employing a little patience (after all, Steven Moffat is unlikely to be in charge of *Doctor Who* to infinity and beyond), some fans would seemingly rather not have the series at all. These criticisms are often phrased in an apparently objective voice, although nothing could be further from the truth.

One amusing incident brought about by agenda-led fans happened last year when Steven Moffat's *Doctor Who* was demonstrated to be failing the Bechdel Test, a parodical assessment designed to spoof exactly the kind of literally minded people who later on began using it in earnest. It's worth noting that *The Vagina Monologues* would not pass such a test, as indeed wouldn't *2001: A Space Odyssey*, for example. It's a shame that some people need the programme to meet certain requirements before they will allow themselves to enjoy it.

Mark Twain described the patriot as "the person who can holler the loudest without knowing what he is hollering about." He might as well have substituted the word 'fan' (inverted commas completely intentional).

Recently on a missing episodes thread of a forum I tend to frequent, somebody posted – apropos of absolutely nothing – a picture of some *Doctor Who* fans in a field, dressed up as various characters from the show and photographed in front of their TARDIS-themed garden shed. The reaction was a roughly equal split between "look at the ugly cosplayers making fools of themselves" and "live and let live." The fans in the photo might not have been the thinnest, prettiest people on the planet, but that's no good reason for them not to entertain themselves in whatever fashion they see fit, so long as they're not causing harm to anyone. Had the comments on the forum been seen by one of those pictured, the same could not be said for the people who had posted them.

Cosplaying is a funny thing. There's no doubt that for those who don't partake, it can be faintly embarrassing – in the way an eccentric aunt might be faintly embarrassing; harmlessly so, in other words, but at the same time often quite compellingly too. As an expression of a person's fandom, dressing up as your heroes is sometimes the only option; we can't all write, act, Photoshop or Trock. If one's creativity stops at choosing an outfit, that's no great crime at all.

And there are of course those who *can* write, act, Photoshop and Trock. The Internet is replete with artworks based upon or inspired by the series we all profess to love, some of which are magical in the extreme, and fan fiction (whether in the form of prose or of short films – especially now in the age of YouTube) has been ongoing since before many of us were born.

Then there are those who like to express their love of the series simply and without flamboyance, merely by clicking "like" on upbeat comments and occasionally by making them themselves. One such person is someone we'll call JS (pictured in the main image), who has to my knowledge never dressed up as the Doctor, never written a short story in which she runs off with Captain Jack, and never appeared in anybody's film pretending her local disused quarry is an alien planet. She'd probably be seen by some as of little consequence, but she is the absolute epitome of what decent fandom is all about. Simply put, she likes *Doctor Who*, and tells people as much, all the while spreading good cheer through affirmative reinforcement of other people's positive commentary. She's a good egg in a world full of quietly good eggs who aren't minded to do anything in the way of shouting.

Those of us who write about *Doctor Who*, whether it be in a magazine, on a blog or in a forum, tend to forget those who don't sometimes. But it's worth bearing in mind next time you're tempted to post an opinion on the subject, that people are far less likely to be offended by someone who says they like something than they are by the implication that someone who does is somehow incapable of viewing it dispassionately. It might be that they don't *want* to view it dispassionately, but they don't need calling a fool because of it – and it might just be that a dispassionate view is one that is less likely to come to such critical conclusions.

Because you see, *Doctor Who*'s primary function is to entertain – and sometimes to enlighten or to spark the imagination – but not to fulfil certain criteria that a particular kind of viewer might bring to it. And as long as 99% of those watching are entertained, and enlightened, and have their imaginations sparked by it, the 1% left shouting at their television sets about whatever agenda they might be maintaining that *Doctor Who* isn't, are the ones who are missing out. Nobody else is disappointed but them – no matter how loudly they might proclaim otherwise. Just like a pre-TARDIS-travelling Donna Noble, bellowing impotently at the world in her ignorance of it.

There are, as I have pointed out, far worse crimes than negative opinions. But it's the *way* in which those opinions are phrased that can help make the world a better place – and if you're not contributing to that, just make sure you're not actively doing the opposite. ✦

ARTWORK BY SIMON BRETT

DINO-WHO

While we may quite rightly be celebrating all things Jurassic; namely *World* and by implication *Park*, surely it's worth noting that director Steven Spielberg is a fan of *Doctor Who* - going so far as to say that the world would be a poorer place without our favourite Time Lord. He might also be thankful that his special effects budget was larger than that granted for the Third Doctor's pre-Attenborough attempt at *Walking with Dinosaurs* (sort of) in *Invasion of the Dinosaurs*!

Episode Two of Series Eleven - Jon Pertwee's last as the 'dandy Doctor' - finds he and Lis Sladen's Sarah Jane Smith returning to what was then present-day London after the events of *The Time Warrior*, notable in that it introduced both conquest-hungry potato lookalikes the Sontarans and indeed the man in the velvet jacket's newest companion.

The investigative journalist had, you'll recall, stowed away aboard the TARDIS and soon found herself thrust into the bandit Irongron's plans for greater power with a little help from the spud-faced 'star warrior' Linx! Back to the 1970s now, however. Only something isn't quite right.

Well, when was the last time you found our nation's fair capital forcibly evacuated by dint of dinosaurs laying waste to it? Depending on your point of view on environmental issues, you might actually find yourself commending the thinking behind the reintroduction of the great prehistoric beasts! For you see, they are but a part of Operation Golden Age.

What's that, you may well ask? It's a great big conspiracy reaching deep into the heart of government, that's what it is! As a result, martial law is declared, and the Doctor and the lovely Sarah are arrested on suspicion of being looters. Never mind the pterodactyl wheeling around up there in the sky while all this is going on...

General Finch, the head of the Army, certainly pays that sort of thing no official heed. Nor for that matter does Sir Charles Grover, a Minister with Special Powers. For they are major players in this planned new Golden Age, as is a certain former UNIT captain - though Mike Yates has been allowed to make a swift exit from service in the Taskforce as a result of that breakdown of his in *The Green Death*.

It might be prudent to stop and ponder just why all three really are so keen on the whole idea, given that a certain predator sharing its moniker with a popular glam rock band of the then-current decade last seen knocking about around 65 million years ago is also on the scene! And it's not a rampaging Marc Bolan, either. Yates at least is content, from an ecological standpoint.

YATES: Have you noticed the air?
SARAH: Hmm?
YATES: It's clean. No cars, no people. Do you know yesterday I saw a fox in Piccadilly?
SARAH: And nightingales in Berkeley Square?

YATES: It's not impossible.
SARAH: No. No, I like London the way it was, traffic jams and all.
YATES: Yes, I expect you're right.

Little wonder he proved so receptive to their ideals. It would seem Grover leans to the Green side of the political spectrum, having authored *Last Chance for Man* - a study on the impact of pollution on the quality of human life. The Doctor is perhaps inevitably able to eventually work out just how the dinosaurs are coming to roam the streets...

BRIGADIER: The Doctor's already come up with a most interesting theory, sir. He believes these creatures are coming to us from the past.
FINCH: Huh. Very interesting. How?
BRIGADIER: Yes, um. Doctor?
DOCTOR: Somebody or something is operating a temporal displacement on a very vast scale.
FINCH: Never mind your scientific gobbledygook.
DOCTOR: The creatures are being brought from the past into the present, General, staying here for a while and then returning to their own time.
FINCH: Rubbish!

Sceptics may not be able to escape the feeling that this may be some form of party political broadcast by the Greens with the news that they appear to have supporters as far afield as Gallifrey!

GROVER: I do apologise for the interruption, Doctor. I realise how busy you are.
DOCTOR: Well, I'm glad somebody does.
GROVER: I understand you may be able to help us find a solution to this crisis.
DOCTOR: Yes, I sincerely hope so. Aren't you the chap who started the 'Save Planet Earth' society?
GROVER: I had something to do with it.
DOCTOR: You also wrote that book, Last Chance for Man, didn't you?
GROVER: Yes, that's right.
DOCTOR: Oh, my dear Grover, I'm delighted to meet you. This planet needs people like you.
BRIGADIER: Yes, of course. You two have a great deal in common. The Doctor's very keen on this anti-pollution business.
GROVER: And so should you be, Brigadier. It affects all our lives.

But is there really any need to create time eddies (with help from Professor Whitaker) in a bid to recreate prehistory just to press home a message about the importance of a cleaner environment for all? Apparently so.

DOCTOR: Just what are they going to do, Mike?
YATES: They're going to roll back time. The world used to be a cleaner, simpler place. It's all become too complicated and corrupt.
DOCTOR: Roll back time, I see. Can Whitaker really do that?
YATES: I believe so. All the preliminary experiments have been successful.
DOCTOR: Do you realise what'll happen if they succeed?
YATES: We shall find ourselves in the Golden Age.
DOCTOR: There never was a Golden Age, Mike. It's all an illusion.
YATES: Not this time. We're going to make it come true.
BRIGADIER: Really. How?
DOCTOR: Whitaker's machine creates a protective field, and anyone within that field will be unaffected. Anybody outside it will just cease to exist.
YATES: Quite right, Doctor.

And while it may be for a noble cause, with even the Doctor expressing some sympathy with these environmentally-friendly ideals; ***"In many ways I sympathise with them. But this is not the way to go about it, you know? You've got no right to take away the existence of generations of people."*** The dinosaurs must go! As must those who brought them back, sent back to live in the real-world equivalent of their planned utopia.

GROVER: Civilisation has already destroyed man. It's time to make a fresh start. If we take the Earth back in time, we can guide man onto a better path.
SARAH: Oh, Doctor!
GROVER: Congratulations, Doctor. You're just in time to be present at the most important moment in the world's history.
DOCTOR: On the contrary, I'm just in time to prevent an atrocity.
BRIGADIER: Don't move, any of you! Benton!
WHITAKER: No! He's reversed the polarity!
DOCTOR: Keep back!
SARAH: Well, where've they gone?
DOCTOR: Back to their Golden Age. And I hope they like it.

Of course, the sharp-dressed man who threw that switch has already seen mankind in its Stone Age infancy, having taken Ian Chesterton and Barbara Wright to 100,000 BC during the early days of his First incarnation...

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

LIVVY BOOTE IS...

THE GIRL FROM PLANET X

This issue, I look at the reasons why I wasn't always a sci-fi fan.

I'm a pretty lousy sci-fi fan.

No, lousy isn't right. Let's go with 'new and intimidated'.

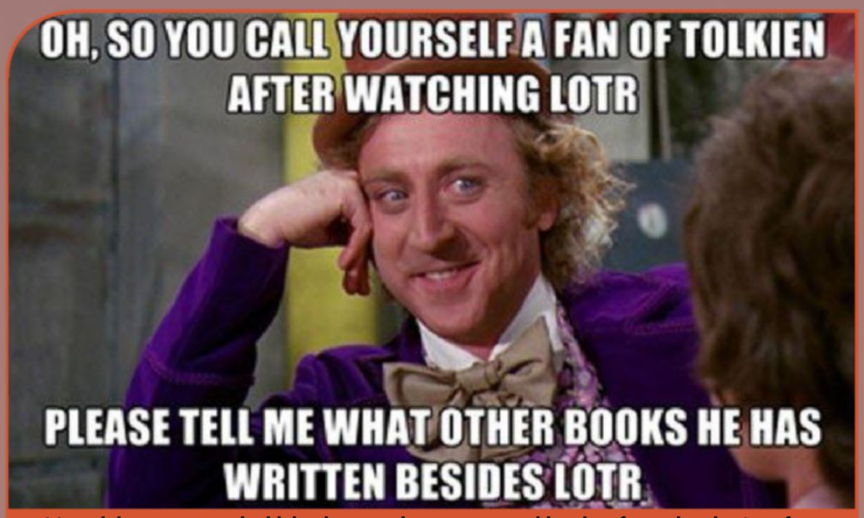
Well, relatively new.

Ok, wait - let's start again.

Growing up, *Star Wars* and *The Lord of the Rings* were never on telly. I couldn't play *Pokémon*, because I didn't have a Gameboy, I didn't have real internet access until 2007 and comic books were things people told me only boys read. In other words, I had no access to this wonderful world of superheroes and science fiction which people spoke about - at least, not until *Doctor Who* came back on TV in 2005.

From that point onwards, life became a struggle to hide my 'geeky' habits - my love for a particular 900-year-old alien who travels in a blue police box, my discovery of cartoons which were supposedly just for kids but were just too good to not watch, my morbid fascination with horror. None of this makes me special, of course. Thousands of children and teenagers feel the same way - am I the only one in the world who likes this stuff, and should I risk seeming hideously uncool for it? And I'm afraid I let that question beat me into submission for too long. It means that there's still essential stuff I haven't seen - like *Battlestar Galactica* and *Red Dwarf* - which I could've watched years ago, potentially making me a lousy sci-fi fan.

Are you serious? Where are her clothes? Cortana from Halo 4 proves the unnecessary sexualisation of female characters in games.



It's sad that some people think others need to prove something, just for saying they're a fan.

Why did this this happen? What stopped me from enjoying the things that I knew I enjoyed - was it really just because of peer pressure?

Recently, I figured it out.

I've spoken about lack of representation and support for women within the sci-fi genre so many times by this point, and yet somehow, I managed to forget that this was the main problem in why I never truly pursued it until a few years ago.

No part of social media is very good at giving a good variety of female characters for women to relate to, and the sci-fi world is no exception. In fact, being a 'nerd' carries the connotations of being a male computer scientist, cracking codes like it's second nature and wearing really big glasses. Basically, when people think of nerd culture, they think of *The Big Bang Theory*. And, if you haven't noticed already, while there are some awesome girl scientists in the show, all of those comic book fanatics that we love to laugh at are guys. Society tells us that girls just aren't allowed in this club, even if that makes no sense at all and most people tend to ignore this because it's stupid.

It seemed important to talk about this, since it's a problem that extends throughout the whole sci-fi and fantasy community. I've been asked so many times why I haven't watched this thing yet or read that thing yet, and have been embarrassed to admit that it's because I'm new to the genre. But now, I'm proud to be discussing the reasons for this in my very own feature article for the fantastically awesome STARBURST. And the reasons are these: I didn't think I was supposed to like sci-fi, because it was a boys' only club. And I was scared to try.

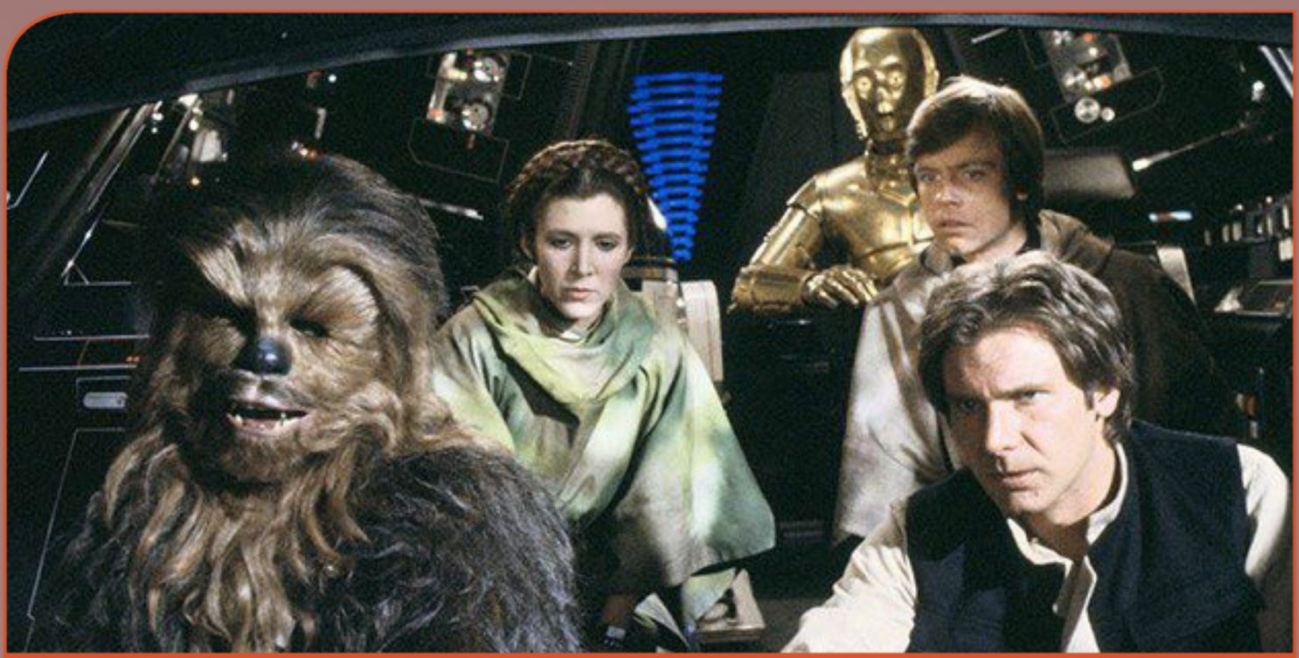
Scared to try? What is there to be scared of? Just because the sci-fi world is portrayed as a predominately male community, doesn't mean I should be afraid. Well, this is true, I shouldn't have felt afraid - nor should all the other women who are in my position - but the fact remains, that I was. Because not only does society tell girls that we shouldn't get involved with sci-fi, but so do many within the community itself.

For example, the world of gaming is particularly intimidating. For one thing, it evokes images of teenage boys playing *FIFA* all day, which I wanted nothing to do with. Also, the one or two female characters hanging around are always distressingly hyper-sexualised (even the aliens. Why does the alien have boobs? WHY?). But what's worse, whenever I mentioned any games that I did enjoy playing to a particular type of guy, their jaw would drop and their eyes would light up as if it were the most unbelievable thing they'd ever heard - as if I'd said it as a pick up line.

"Wow, you're a girl gamer? That's so hot!"

You won't think that once you see me making my way through my third packet of

GAMING AND CONVENTION COMMUNITIES



Now, I love Leia. But honestly, the lack of female characters in Star Wars meant that I never really connected to it.

Doritos in front of *Spyro the Dragon*, cheese dust all over my face and three chins from lying down in an unflattering position...

Despite the fact that in 2014, 48% of gamers were girls, there are still plenty of guys who think that girl gamers are a rare species, either doing it because they're joking around (so what if they are? It's a *game*), or they're trying to pick up guys (I've never tried boasting my *BioShock* knowledge to pick up a guy. Does that really work?). Can a girl just like sci-fi, because she likes sci-fi? No. *There must be an ulterior motive*.

Conventions are also one of the easiest ways to encounter judgement for being a female sci-fi fan. It doesn't matter whether you're wearing a tiny Poison Ivy cosplay or full battle armour, female cosplayers are always the subject of scrutiny.

"Wow, uhh, you're really hot, can I have a hug?"

"Wow you're... erm... 'brave' for wearing something so small... (wow, slutty...)"

"Oh, so you like Batman. Do you read the comics?"

As a female convention goer, if you've managed to avoid the strange men with cardboard 'free hugs' signs or having pictures taken of you without your permission, then you've done well. You'll hopefully also avoid the guys who don't believe you're a "true fan", that you're just wearing the outfit because it's cute (what's so wrong with that, anyway? You do look cute. *Rock it, sister*).

And it's not even necessarily during conventions that this 'you're not a real fan' problem or the 'fake geek girl' problem exists. You might be in the queue at Tescos, when a kind stranger compliments your Marvel shoulder-bag and then suddenly quizzes you on whether you've *actually read* any Quicksilver comics, interrogating you on which is your favourite. Or perhaps you're wearing your *Star Trek* jumper, and the person who had just said something nice about it goes and ruins it all by trying to talk to you in Klingon, tapping their foot expectantly and dubiously awaiting a response.

If I've not read any Quicksilver comics yet, if I have no idea how to say anything in Klingon but *Qapla'*, why is that a problem? Does that *really* make me any less of a fan, just because I haven't read or seen or learned everything about it yet? Why do I need to prove myself in the first place? Is it because the sci-fi world has so little female representation, to the extent that women almost don't seem to belong? *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Avengers* - one thing they all have in common is that they have very few female characters, often a single one, who admittedly kicks ass, but also seems to stick out like a sore thumb because everyone else is a guy. Is this why for some, when women say that they're fans of sci-fi, they also seem out of place?

This is the best explanation I can come up with. There may well be another reason for misogyny within the sci-fi and fantasy community, but it seems to me that the reason why some women are hesitant to come out as a fan is because there's still this crazy idea that we're not supposed to enjoy it at all. It's strange that a genre stereotyped for being populated by nerdy recluses is simultaneously so exclusive.

I'm no longer embarrassed to say that I've still never played *Pokémon* or *Skyrim*, or finished watching all of *Star Trek: Next Generation*, that I haven't even seen part II and III of the *Star Wars* prequels yet (did you know how hard they are to find for a reasonable price on DVD?). I'm just still a bit of a newbie, and for good reasons. The important thing is this - I'm exploring the genre now, even if I am a little bit late. And from what I've seen so far, I really, truly, *love it*.

TIPTOE THROUGH THE TULIPS WITH THREE!

by Jack Bottomley

Ahead of INSIDIOUS: CHAPTER 3, STARBURST recounts the success of the franchise and the story thus far…

H.P. Lovecraft once wrote, "*The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown*". For centuries, writers, poets, storytellers and mythmakers have spoken of strange beings and forces and as human beings we inherently fear what we cannot fathom, validate or explain. Horror is defined in the dictionary as 'an intense feeling of fear, shock, or disgust'. So by that very definition it's all well and good splashing the screen with blood or filling a novel with dramatic pauses but without tapping into a particular feeling, emotion or experience of the audience, true horror cannot be achieved. Horror is a genre, but also a mood and within the foggy realms of the onscreen paranormal netherworld known as the Further, you could argue that such horrors can be found. *Insidious* arrived in cinemas to unexpected success and as the title suggests, it was a story of wicked, intensifying terror brought about by harmful spirits (ghosts don't half get a bad rep in films).

Since helming the intelligent blood-drenched *Saw* (2004) (itself tapping into a moral aspect to underpin its horrific imagery), Director James Wan and star/writer Leigh Whannell have become two big names in the horror genre. Yet being a 'big name' is not as hard as it was before, perhaps it's down to the mainstream glut of remakes or the saturation of certain styles in the market, but horror cinema nowadays does not have the credentials it once did. No doubt as an open minded reader, you know that if you seek out the full extent of what is on offer, this very notion is a fallacy but looking at the populist output of the genre, it is easy to make such an overstatement. The days that William Friedkin controversially spun our heads with *The Exorcist* or Tobe Hooper delightfully disgusted us with *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* may seem to have passed but this isn't really the case is it? Well in 2011, arguably no mainstream horror garnered more attention than James Wan's *Insidious*.

As previously stated, people for years have dwelled on our fear of the unexplainable and after so many centuries of such stories, is it any wonder that cinema nowadays is called out as short of innovation? However if we go back, just as a third film approaches, to the start of this paranormal series, you can see that it was not innovation that Wan was aiming for with *Insidious* but rejuvenation. After achieving relatively positive reviews (a rather underappreciated score of 66% on Rotten Tomatoes) and becoming a sleeper hit that year, *Insidious* was a surprising box office success. At face value, you could see it as another creepy kid here, jump scare there, cliché of a film but if we take the time to sit back and sink into our thoughts, there was more going on here than bog standard bumps in the night. The glory days of the

horror genre are often cited as the '70s and '80s before the inundation of certain motifs meant some audiences grew bored. And it's with this in mind we consider *Insidious* in all its efficiency.

Wan's film was not one that aimed entirely to break new ground, but to go back and restore fertile lands. *Insidious* was a paranormal chiller that told a simple haunted house story but at the same time was a throwback to a bloodless, nail scraping age of supernatural suspense and demonic debauchery. Think a Sam Raimi offering blended with Hooper's *Poltergeist* and you are not far off the mark. *Insidious* was a return to the ghost train theatrics and smoke-laden lairs of onscreen bogeymen. Being at times playful (keep an eye out in the background) and at others in your face (he's behind you). Everything down to Joseph Bishara's wonderful violin scratching score (Bishara also portrayed the Darth Maul Grandma-like demon interestingly enough - more on that later) and the over the top atmospherics screamed of an age gone by, given a whole new life. *Insidious* was a mainstream horror film being what a horror tale should be - frightening and irresistible to a baying audience.

And yet what was the real tale being told? Well, like Lovecraft's quote says, it's simply the fear of the unknown. The first film saw parents Renai (Rose Byrne) and Josh (Patrick Wilson) Lambert move into a new home, with their sons Dalton (Ty Simpkins) and Foster (Andrew Astor) only to begin experiencing strong, unexplainable occurrences surrounding Dalton in particular. Trying to move out (does that ever work?) doesn't help and soon Renai and Josh discover that Josh's past has come back to haunt them, as their son has the same 'gift' he did as a child of astral projection (or being able to leave his physical body at night and explore the paranormal realms). Naturally, a great evil has capitalised on this and left Dalton in a coma, ensnaring Dalton's spirit in the realm of 'the Further' (a paranormal territory filled with nefarious spirits). This red and black faced demon wants his body for sinister purposes and with the help of Josh's mother Lorraine (Barbara Hershey), Josh and Renai are forced to call paranormal investigator Elise Reiner (Lin Shaye) and her (somewhat bickering) sidekicks, Specs (Leigh Whannell) and Tucker (Angus Sampson) to try and help save their son and reconnect Josh with a past hidden from him by his mother and Elise many years ago.

Essentially, *Insidious* told a story of fighting your demons (literally) and stepping into the unknown (again literally). The film was a joyride of sorts through the genre; littered with mystical tricks and nostalgic scares, orchestrated with verve and knowingness by Wan. The film established its setting of the Further (which was to play out later on), successfully taunting a mass audience and rebirthing the spirit of the playful but scary horrors of old, as well as turning Tiny Tim's rendition of *Tiptoe through the Tulips* into a bastardised seed of evil. By the end of the film, Josh was confronted by his childhood trauma of being haunted by a woman in black (no relation to that old bat that spooked Daniel Radcliffe), and despite his rekindled fear, through hypnosis, he stepped into the Further to

save Dalton. Coming face to face with many malevolent spirits as well as the red-faced lead demon, Josh reclaimed his son from the darkness (despite a slight distraction by the woman in black). So all is well right? Oh come now, this is horror not Disney! At the climax of the film Josh and Dalton return to the real world, but Elise notices something about Josh and takes a picture (by the way, he hates that,

due to the fact photography was a big factor in his mother discovering his gifts and this hag haunting him as a child), to find his body is inhabited by - da da daaaa - said woman in black, who kills Elise and leaves things on a violin grating end. Gasp!

This final twist, of course, left things up in the air, which is an effective means of concluding a mystifying horror film, but after taking $97 million on a $1.5 million budget, obviously a sequel was imminent. Enter 2013's *Insidious: Chapter 2*, which saw Wan return behind the camera and the cast reunite. Rarely does a sequel regroup the cast and crew and come with such high hopes surrounding it; sadly (while addressing certain mysterious occurrences of the first and expanding the mythos) it was far less effective, if financially successful (taking $161 million worldwide). If *Insidious* was a simple, throwback tale of dangerous forces and confronting the unknown, its sequel was about reclaiming the lost and using the past to fight the present (in that respect, sharing slight similarities with Kubrick's *The Shining*). Not only jumping back into the Further, but also veering through time undeniably complicated the narrative. As well as addressing the past of the 'woman' in black which did expand the overall story - if not always for the better. *Insidious: Chapter 2* starts in 1986, showing how a younger Elise, Lorraine and Elise's medium friend Carl (played predominantly in the film by Steve Coulter) help a young Josh forget about his abilities and save him from the clutches of the woman in black. From this point the film follows up on the last, as Elise's death is being investigated and Renai suspects that the woman in black has taken over Josh (hardly a rocket science revelation). Things get even worse as a mysterious woman in white haunts the home, forcing Lorraine to speak with Specs and Tucker. They seek out Carl and attempt to contact the spirit of Elise for guidance. They are led to an abandoned hospital where they learn that 'the woman in black' was actually a severely disturbed man called Parker Crane who committed suicide years ago and they were led here by Parker's mother (the woman in white). Still with us?

Meanwhile, Josh's body is breaking down while under the control of Parker and as the group try to control the problem Carl is killed, awaking in the Further to find the real Josh and they both eventually meet up with Elise (as she saves Josh from the spirit of Parker's mother). Dalton then arrives (in a reverse of the last film) to guide his dad back to the real world, and Josh awakens in his own body once again. All is well, then? Of course not, what did we already tell you? The film naturally ends openly, with Specs and Tucker visiting a case where a young girl has unexpectedly slipped into a coma (sound familiar?). However, Elise's spirit is there with them investigating the case. She hears a familiar scratching sound (the noise Mr. Maul

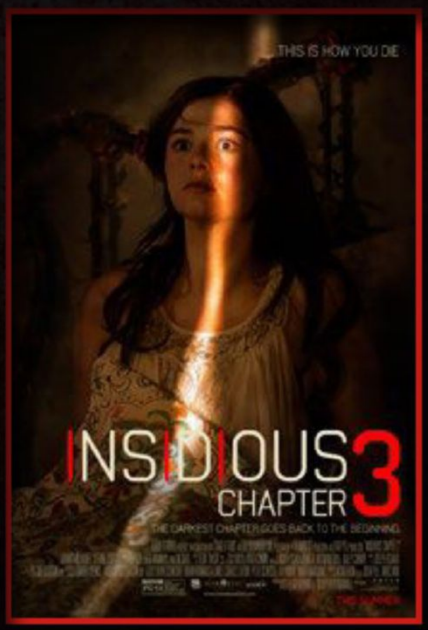
demon made in the first film) and looks up (at something off camera) in terror.

We know what you're thinking: possession, astral projection, mediums, transvestite murderous spirits; it all went a bit through the wringer in the sequel, didn't it? Indeed it did. To be fair, it had a few creepy ideas and some clever links with the first film, but at the same time it felt needlessly convoluted and explaining certain backstories and phenomena to such extent actually meant that the mystique was somewhat lost. Wan's direction also seemed far more on autopilot in this sequel, with repeated tame scares and a story that eventually couldn't decide what it was trying to say. Critical reception was harsher as a result and while the series story was expanded, it felt sloppily executed and rather muddled. For instance, Parker's mother raised him as a girl, abused him and created a gender-confused monster, but as for why? That's anybody's guess.

However, moving on from the past, we now arrive at the present and anyone who felt a tad dispirited (tee hee) by the second film should be happy to hear that *Insidious Chapter 3* is going to be very different. In fact, the film will not focus on the Lambert family at all and will take place before all those events, seeing how Elise, alongside Specs and Tucker, helps a young girl named Quinn Brenner (played by Stefanie Scott) who's being haunted by sinister supernatural entity (quelle surprise). The trailer has an unshakable vibe of *Rosemary's Baby* about it, and while the prequel route is becoming a little rote nowadays, lest we forget how well this worked for *Paranormal Activity 3* (which, in this writer's mind, is the strongest of that particular series). Shaye is thankfully back as Elise, as are Whannell and Sampson as Specs and Tucker, alongside Dermot Mulroney as new character, Sean Brenner. Little is known about the actual story, although it looks to be more akin to the first film. Duties behind the camera are being handed over to Whannell, making his directorial debut, as well as producing, alongside Wan and, ironically enough, *Paranormal Activity*'s Oren Peli.

While this direction does leave the end of the last film open (for now), chances are *Chapter 3* will reference or predate what has already played out in the last two films. It is hard to imagine we won't be taking another stroll through the Further at some point. This being said, here is a chance for the series to get back to basics and hopefully supply the frights and homages that the first film offered in abundance. The fear of the unknown is still a persistent anxiety among mankind and it is hard to imagine the appeal of sinister forces and demonic hauntings will ever fully diminish. But after the series has gone from unexpected beginnings to somewhat bizarre ends, one thing is for sure - *Insidious: Chapter 3* will be a breaking point for the series and for Whannell, who we hope makes this next tiptoe through the tulips worth it. Sleep tight kids… until the 5th of June that is.

INSIDIOUS: CHAPTER 3 will be haunting UK cinemas from June 5th.



DEVILS IN MYKONOS

by Dominic Cuthbert

A cause célèbre of the video nasty age, the Greek exploitation classic ISLAND OF DEATH returns fully uncut and, for the first time, in high definition. Let's find out what the fuss was about...

Film censorship in England is a study in changing tastes and morals, and a litmus test of political correctness. Sparking a moral panic in the eighties, when horror movies were making killers of our kids, the 'video nasty' list soon became the go-to guide for the discerning gore fan. Nico Mastorakis' infamous Greek exploitation flick *Island of Death* has had an especially fraught history with the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification). Like Mastorakis himself has said, the story behind a film is often more interesting than the movie itself.

Director Mastorakis, who was a major player in Greek TV, became inspired to make *Island of Death* after noticing the financial success of Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. Given the film's gritty nastiness and hazy intensity, it's logical to assume that upping the violence and perversity would rake in more cash, and that's just what Mastorakis did. The proto-slasher was not only one of the earliest attempts to mimic *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, but one of the principal titles in Greek exploitation cinema, and certainly the most successful.

After listing the most depraved sexual acts he could conceive, Mastorakis wrote the script in a week. The $35,000 budget was so low that he even had to take on the role of the novelist because the original actor wanted more than the budget allowed. Mastorakis has often gone on record to say that there was no artistic intention behind *Island of Death* and that it was a labour of financial lust, to afford him a prosperous filmmaking career. To that end, his feature debut was a roaring success; the controversial screen matter ensured its place on the video nasty list, courting notoriety and cementing its place in the cinematic pantheon. It also made Mastorakis a bankable name. But be that as it may, the cinematography is rich, and the film remarkably well constructed for its budget, intention and 18-day production, with whiffs of Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now* and even Hal Ashby's *Harold and Maude*, if the titular duo had been incestuous sadists instead.

The plot is a bizarre cacophony of senselessness, where sibling lovers Christopher (Robert Behling) and Celia (Jane Lyle) arrive on the idyllic Grecian island of Mykonos, on a pious crusade to knock off inhabitants dabbling in depravity. But they are the chief exponents, on a psychosexual bender to nowhere, provoking locals into sexual acts and administering a series of progressively worse punishments, from forced paint ingestion to melting a face with an aerosol can and candle. It's a nonsensical script where characters contradict themselves and trying to find any reason behind their motivations is likely to cause a brain haemorrhage. It flits between picturesque imagery and perverted violence in one fell swoop, all tempered with cod religious imagery. Most of the actors were either models, tourists or folk dragged in off the street and their lack of acting chops is evident. The dubbing synchronisation only adds insult to injury. But Behling, himself a professional thespian, gives a Shakespearean quality to his performance and is strangely compelling, despite raping and killing a goat.

While a BBFC classification isn't strictly necessary for a theatrical release, it is a requirement for any distributor looking for general widespread release. With the video nasty panic well underway, and the Video Recordings Act being passed in 1984, it became a legal requirement for every film to be given a BBFC certification before it could be released for home viewing in the UK. Even if a film had already been given the go-ahead for a theatrical release, it needed to be resubmitted for any home

video format. *Island of Death* was passed X, with almost 14 minutes of cuts, for its 1976 theatrical release under the name *A Craving for Lust* (one of multiple titles which also included *Island of Perversion* and *Devils in Mykonos*). The film was released uncut on home video by AVI in 1982, but by November 1983 it got swept up in the video nasty fever spreading across the country. It soon became one of the DPP's (Department of Public Prosecution) 39 videos most liable for prosecution for being obscene, in the master list of 72 nasties. If the Director of Public Prosecution deemed any title in violation of the Obscene Publications Act of 1959, The DPP could take the offending film to court. And they did, in abundance. This meant that video stores stocking said offending titles could be prosecuted, and their stock seized. Strangely, *Island of Death* was deleted by the time the next video nasty issue came around, before returning in October 1985, where it soon became a mainstay. The initial disappearance is thought to be because it was confused with Narciso Ibáñez Serrador's film *Who Can Kill a Child?* - released as *Island of Death* in the UK.

In 1987 it was cut once again, this time by 13 minutes (which unsurprisingly comprised of the sexual violence and degradation), renamed *Psychic Killer 2* and resubmitted, but the BBFC refused classification all the same. In order to achieve an 18 certificate rating in 2002, the distributor was required to cut over 4 minutes of footage, again comprised of sexual violence, degradation and humiliation. This included the bathroom rape scene, in which two hippy types accost Celia while she bathes, and the 'golden shower' sequence where Christopher pisses on a half-naked older woman. To anyone who has seen the film, you'll know that sexual violence makes up a good chunk of proceedings, and would have made even less sense without it. As a sign of the times, censorship has relaxed and the BBFC has been slowly allowing controversial titles to resurface, passing them with minimal cuts or none at all. *Island of Death* was finally passed uncut in September 2010 for Arrow Video's DVD release, and five years later, Arrow has released the full uncut version on Blu-ray. The release presents the feature in a crisp and clear quality; the mono audio is up to scratch with the oddball soundtrack pootling things along.

Unsurprisingly, Mastorakis' own attitudes towards censorship aren't positive. While he's all for protecting children from explicit content, he's fervently against telling adults what they can and can't watch, decrying censors as medieval, and the BBFC in particular as totalitarian and draconian. He had disclosed his vitriolic stance years before *Island of Death* was finally passed uncut. In recent years, he's praised censors' so called 'stupidity', even thanking them for making *Island of Death* a cult movie by banning and cutting it. And he's right, without the hullabaloo surrounding its release, *Island of Death* would have faded into obscurity. A little controversy goes a long way.

But why such a troubled history? It doesn't have the nihilistic scuzz of *Cannibal Holocaust*, or the viciousness of *The Last House on the Left*. Then again, given Mastorakis' list of degradations, which include incest, bestiality, body mutilation, torture, crucifixion, rape and more besides, it's really no wonder. For all its idyllic setting, it's deliberately provocative and tasteless. But because it's such a calculated ball of sleaze, it ends up being blackly comic, with its terrible script, over-acting and folk-infused soundtrack. It's offensive, and the rape scenes are deeply uncomfortable to watch, but still, it might just be the most daring and definitive exploitation movie to date.

The uncut Blu-ray edition of ISLAND OF DEATH – which features seven hours of extra features – is released on May 25th.

NICO MASTØRAKIS

Words: Martin Unsworth

ISLAND OF DEATH has been subject to many tales over the years, we spoke to director Nico Mastorakis to get the truth behind one of the original VIDEO NASTIES...

STARBURST: What was the Greek film industry like at the time you made *Island of Death*?
Nico Mastorakis: In the seventies, Greek cinema made a shy transition from conservative to provocative, when from mainstream melodramas, comedies and pseudo-historical epics, a section of the Greek film makers turned to soft porn - with survival being their only motivation. Soon they were making money, not only domestically but also abroad (where the soft version included some clumsy hardcore stuff, shot separately and in the absence of the key actors). Maybe I too made a miniscule change in the going trends, with *Death Has Blue Eyes*, the first parapsychological thriller and then with *Island of Death*, which was a shock to the industry. Not just the local industry though. I remember that in the first screening, during the Cannes market, distributors left the theatre half way through feeling sick! And those who left disgusted were the ones who came back to buy the movie the next day.

How does it feel that so many critics and commenters have found artistic merit in *Island of Death* when it was made solely for financial means?
The end justified the means - or vice versa? As in the thin plot of *Island of Death*, where indeed, the means justified the end! The fact is that when I read the first review in **Screen International** [after the theatrical release in London] there was so much praise and the reviewer had discovered so many metaphors, that I thought they made a mistake and I had to read the title twice! Critics have the right and the duty, actually, to dig deeper into a movie, ignore the motivations of the filmmaker and find their own values. Most of the time, they discover crap instead of diamonds, sometimes they find diamonds in the crap. So, to interpret another Nico (Machiavelli) into cinematic lingo: "*Actions can only be considered artistically right or wrong by virtue of the art of the outcome.*"

Did you have to consider any kind of therapy after making the film?
[Laughs] My therapy was *making* the movie. So much fun lighting and operating the huge Blimp Arri [camera] for a week before my DP showed up, casting the locals, setting up a decapitation, crucifying an actor on the front yard of the church, operating a blood pump and even playing a small part to the dismay of my crew and friends. The audience has a misconception about writers and directors, who write and/or make violent movies, they think that they're nuts. But it's usually the opposite, it's the violent wackos who make pretentiously normal films!

How (if at all) have your opinions of censorship changed in lieu of the BBFC passing *Island of Death* uncut?
I'm stunned, I marvel at their bravery! Opinions changed? Not at all, I still believe that the Brits, a truly progressive audience, do not deserve such a typically medieval institution, to tell adults what they can watch and what they shouldn't. It defies logic and when that happens, I consider censorship a much more dangerous kind of violence than the one portrayed on film. I suspect that, through the history of censors in the UK, someone who may had cut out a bestiality scene, maybe went to his country home and fucked his goat.

You made a list of depravities to include in the film before making it. If you were to make it now, are there any more you would add, or anything you wouldn't do?
There's nothing new I could do, as depravities have been overdone as TV's playground for over a decade. Watching *CSI* and its spinoffs, one can make a list of the best of the worst depravities ever filmed. TV has outdone *Island of Death* and anything else in this genre. And when it comes to graphic violence, splatter, blood and guts, there's a plenty of them every day in the evening news. The pretence of "making the audience aware" is such a fucked up device for networks to legally play endless decapitations, child porn and kinky sex on primetime.

What would your attitude be if someone wanted to remake the film?
All offers welcome! However, I'm planning to shoot *Island of Death 2* this summer! It will be totally different in tone, theme and mood. More sophisticated. A kind of study of the density of violence ordinary people carry throughout their existence, until they break the wall which separates true good from pure evil. All that, in a world where true good is unethical and outlawed and evil is the only moral status quo. I'll make it without philosophical or artistic bullshit pretences, but with the true, one and only motivation commercial film producers have: To make money. We'll later know if, in this case too, the end justified the means or if it was, once more, the other way around. Really, wouldn't it be fun to see *Island of Death 2* win the Cannes Film Festival?

HORROR Obscura

As a change of pace, the meticulous Martin Unsworth ponders the changing face of cinema-going, as well as a much maligned but misused category.

THERE'S GOING TO B TROUBLE

Recently on the STARBURST Radio Show, which goes out live on Fab Radio International and later released as a podcast on iTunes, the subject of B-movies came up. This brought out the rather pedantic side of this writer as I tried to argue that to truly qualify as such, the film would have to have been made – or at least released - as a second feature. This was standard practice for decades until the cinemas changed the way films were shown in order to fit in more screenings. Naturally, as time went on, the term has come to be applied to anything low budget or a little on the 'wonky' side, so to speak.

However, from the early days of cinema, the studios made 'second features' as a matter of course. Bear in mind, the majority of films had running times of less than eighty minutes; most rarely topping an hour or so. So to have two shorter films play together seemed great value for money. The studios, of course, spent less on the supporting movie than the main one, although it's arguably these smaller, tighter, pictures that have become

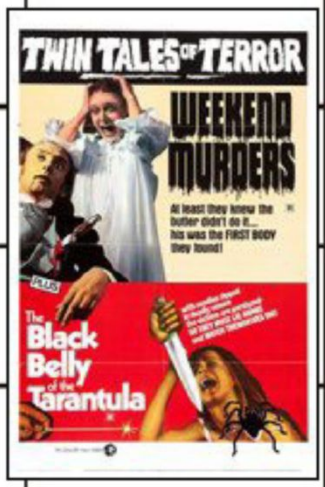
favourites with fans of cult cinema over the years. It was also invariably genre films that would fit the bill, too. Be they horror, noir, western or comedy.

Although often made as cheaply as possible, and under some of the notorious 'poverty row' studios (such as Monogram, Republic and Grand National), many of the most famous film series from the thirties and forties were actually 'B' pictures. MGM's *Andy Hardy* series ran for ten years from 1937, producing fifteen films, while the *Sherlock Holmes* films began at 20th Century Fox in 1939, then moved to Universal after two films, spawning another twelve before coming to an end in 1946. Still revered today, the films had the intrepid investigator played by the brilliant Basil Rathbone, with Nigel Bruce playing Dr Watson. It's Bruce's portrayal of the sidekick as a bumbling if benevolent 'uncle' type that was quite contentious at the time (and indeed, still is today to die-hard Holmes fans). In reality though, it's this interpretation of the character that has brought more onus onto Watson. And if he came across as comic relief at times, then the stern and imposing presence of Rathbone brought the drama right back to earth. The films also featured a wealth of talent from the roster of genre actors of the time; none of them strangers to B-movies. These included legends such as John Carradine, Lionel Atwill, George Zucco, Ida Lupino, Evelyn Ankers and, playing the lumbering strangler for which he would become synonymous, Rondo Hatton (see **Horror Obscura # 392**).

Other popular series included the Charlie Chan films starring Warner Oland (could you imagine those getting made like that today?) and a score of movies involving the adventures of The Saint. Universal, while having success with their monsters, made just as many B-movies to run alongside them.

RKO studios were famous for making almost exclusively B-pictures. The most revered and loved were those made by the unit under the production eye of Val Lewton. The series of shockers he made with such fantastic directors as Jacques Tourneur and Robert Wise would become genuine cinema classics and are still looked upon as influential today (See **STARBURST #383**).

The Golden Age of Hollywood gave way

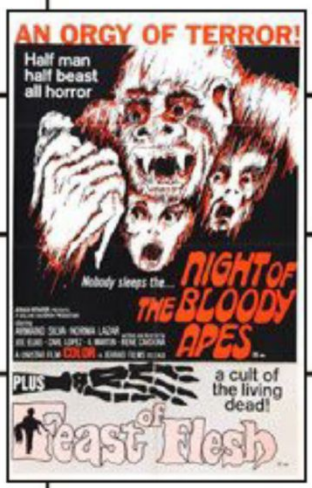


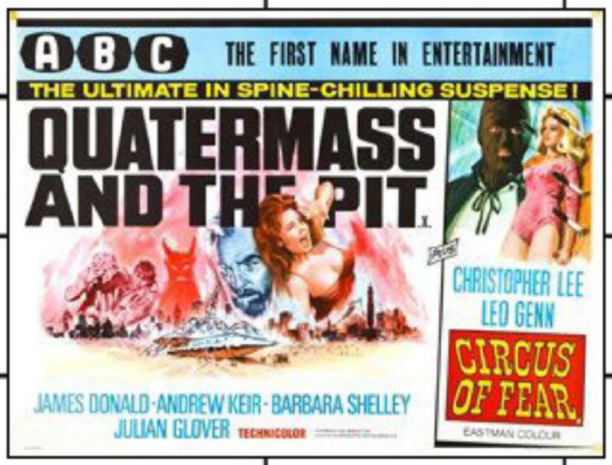
to a more open system, as the studios' control of the theatres slipped. Instead of dictating what was shown (a practice which has pretty much come back into play), cinemas had free reign to programme their screenings. Often, to maximise profits, they would schedule two B-movies together, eschewing the major films altogether. It's around this time that sci-fi was becoming a common subject, and more B's were made exploiting the young audiences' desire for space travel and bug-eyed monsters. Directors such as Roger Corman, and further among the underground of filmmakers, Russ Meyer and H.G. Lewis (see **Horror Obscura #388**) began making cheap, quick films which promised plenty of action, titillation, and fun. They delivered on most counts, although it's arguable that we enjoy them for many different reasons today. While the industry has always been about exploitation and still very much is, just on different levels and not as inventive, the films of early Hollywood had to skate around prudish attitudes and strict censorship. The B-movie gave way to drive-in films that promised and delivered more than suggested thrills and overly dramatic acting.

William Castle's series of horror films and thrillers took the 3D craze one step further, by bringing a sense of theatre to the cinema. What he made were essentially B-movies, he made them for as little as possible to reap the most financial rewards, but the promotion and ballyhoo that surrounded their release was more akin to the circus barkers of P.T. Barnum (see **STARBURST #376 and 377**).

Today, the term has been used to encompass a whole host of films that really were not meant as B-movies. Anything low budget, tacky, or lacking in polish is often dismissed as a 'B'. For a while, it became a term of derision, which is very unfair. We forget that for a long time, the B-movie was actually just replaced by the double bill. From the drive-in cinemas of the USA, to the later sleazy, cheap theatres of 42nd Street (known as the grindhouse circuit these days): and even over here in the UK, films were being paired up for screenings in local cinemas all over the land.

It's this tradition of doubling up on films that allowed the film chosen on the radio

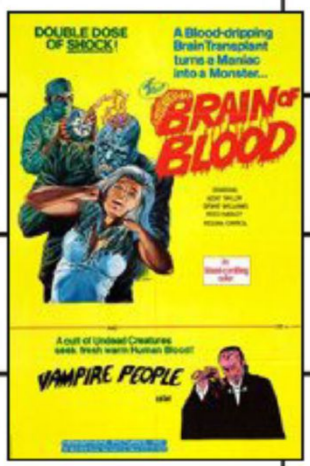




show to be classed the greatest B-movie ever - *The Wicker Man* (1973). For the film, on its initial cinema run, was the supporting feature to Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now*. The distributor, British Lion, as is now well known, had undergone a change of management and the new lot didn't take to Robin Hardy's bizarre horror-musical at all. Chopping a good fifteen minutes from the running time, they sent it out into the world expecting it to be forgotten. How wrong they were. The film is now considered one of the greatest British horror films – if not films in general – of all time.

The experience of cinema-going was considerably different in those days, too. There were no 'event' films; indeed, on occasion in the UK, we could wait almost a year for a big film to make its way over from the States. The cinemas would run what was known as 'continuous performances' when they booked a film. Essentially, what this meant was the programme would consist of two films, broken up by advertisements (often for a local curry house), trailers, and a pleasant if bored lady with some tubs of ice cream in a tray around her neck standing at the front of house. When the main feature had finished, the audience would leave and a new bunch of punters would stream in. What actually happened more often than not was people would just sit there and watch the whole lot again. It was common that if you had missed the first film, you would stay seated then watch it as it rolled through the projector again. Similarly, had you come to the screening after the movie had started, you'd often stay until that point in the next performance, then leave like good little patrons.

This practice carried on until the early eighties, and double bills were still popular, only instead of pairing a 'subpar' film with a larger commercial one, it would more often than not, be a re-release of a big film from the previous year or so. Some famous pairings included *Carquake* alongside *The Giant Spider Invasion* (OK, that one doesn't really bear out the 'big' movie argument), *The Incredible Melting Man* with *The Savage Bees*, *Rollerball* and *Death Race 2000*, several James Bond films were paired up and released almost a decade after they were made, and the Sinbad films of Ray Harryhausen were reissued



with completely unrelated knockabout comedies such as *Watch Out, We're Mad!* and *Salt and Pepper*. As the eighties dawned, the practice continued. Even as late as 1985, when *Runaway*, the film written and directed by *Jurassic Park*'s Michael Crichton and starring Tom Selleck and KISS bassist Gene Simmons, did the rounds with the fabulous *Blue Thunder* in tow.

As the cinema chains began to see less profit in running double bills, they moved into separate performances, in which the auditorium was emptied (and allegedly cleaned, not always guaranteed in the heyday of the 'flea pit', pre-multiplex) and the next batch of patrons would be allowed in just prior to the trailers and Kia-ora ad. Now, of course, this did away with the cheeky blighters who'd stay in the screening over and over again, but it also meant that support features were a thing of the past. And, of course, should you arrive late, you'd have to pay again to see the bit you'd missed.

As the budgets of films became bigger, and the 'blockbuster' syndrome kicked in after *Jaws* blew the whole thing open in 1975, cinemas began to rely more on the pulling power of the film rather than just somewhere to go on a night out or date. The economy meant people were more selective as to how they spent their money, and with the advent of home video, the thought of paying good money to see a couple of films that might be rubbish didn't seem as appealing as renting a rubbish film and staying at home. But the term B-movie continued to flourish, being applied to films willy-nilly, almost with as much abandon as 'cult' (now there's another argument for a later date).

So what do *you* think? Should we use the B-movie tag even when it's clearly not one? Do you have any recollections of past double bill screenings? We'd love to hear from you, and to share your nostalgia. Alternatively, if you're lucky enough to be a mere youngster, do you like the idea of seeing two films for your ticket price? Contact us via email (letters@starburstmagazine.com) or through the address at the front of the magazine. In the meantime, we're going to have a Cornetto before the next film starts...

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As the classic eighties film is remoulded for a new generation, STARBURST opens the casebook on the strange and scary goings-on with the POLTERGEIST films...

The CURSE of POLTERGEIST

By John Townsend

POLTERGEIST

With long blonde hair that made her instantly recognisable and famous for the lines "*They're here!*" and "*They're baa-aack!*" from the *Poltergeist* films she was synonymous with, Heather O'Rourke's portrayal of the tormented Carol Anne remains one of cinema's most memorable, and most chilling.

Tragically on February 1st, 1988, prior to the release of *Poltergeist 3*, O'Rourke died in Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego. She was 12 years old. With her death, the fourth connected with the series at that time, began a myth that endures to this day: The Curse of *Poltergeist*.

A poltergeist itself is a supernatural being, most often experienced in the form of a ghost, widely blamed for physical disturbances usually involving the moving of furniture and the like. Coming from the German word for 'noisy ghost', these disturbances are often violent, with some victims having reported biting and pinching, but are rarely fatal.

On June 4th, 1982, *Poltergeist* was released. Written by Steven Spielberg, who co-produced with Frank Marshall, and directed by Tobe Hooper, the film was an enormous worldwide success. Following the Freeling family as their daughter becomes the focal obsession for angry spirits, *Poltergeist* is revered as one of the best and most influential horror films of the 1980s, if not the past 30 years. Something else began on that June day though; the mythology of a curse. By the time the third and final film was released almost six years later to the day, four cast members would be dead. So is there any truth behind the legend?

Despite a lifetime devoted to theatre and the arts, and small roles in several films including *The Cotton Club* and *9 ½ Weeks*, it is for his role as evil preacher Kane in *Poltergeist II* that Julian Beck will be most remembered. He's also known as one of the actors connected with the series to die. Beck passed away from stomach cancer on September 14th, 1985 before filming on the sequel was completed, with his remaining scenes either filled by designs from H. R. Giger (most famous for his work on *Alien*) who had created the 'Beast' from the first film, or by looping Beck's voice in post-production. While tragic that he was unable to enjoy the fame this role would have brought him, Beck's death is not overly sinister in nature, as the diagnosis of the cancer that would eventually take his life was made in 1983, more than a year before he was cast as Kane.

Prior to taking on the role of Taylor in *Poltergeist II*, Will Sampson had appeared in several major films including a key role as fake mute [*spoiler alert! – Ed*] Chief Bromden in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and as Ten Bears in revered western *The Outlaw Josey Wales*. His performance as a Native American Shaman in the spooky series was hugely popular amongst fans but brought further notoriety to the series following his death on June 3rd, 1987. Again though, it would seem that natural causes were to blame. Sampson suffered from a degenerative disease called scleroderma that attacked his heart, lungs, and skin and caused him to lose nearly half his body weight resulting in malnutrition. Following a heart and lung transplant designed to extend his life, he suffered post-operative liver failure and died aged 53. In his youth, Sampson was an extremely fit and healthy man, competing in rodeos riding the legendary bucking broncos, so the speed and extremity of his demise was shocking, if not entirely mysterious.

There were two more deaths that, while less well reported, still add to the mythos of the curse. Zelda Rubinstein, who played eccentric medium Tangina Barrons, died in 2010 aged 76, after never fully recovering from a mild heart attack, and Englishman Brian Gibson who directed *Poltergeist II* died of cancer in 2004 aged 59.

WILL SAMPSON

DOMINIQUE DUNNE

POLTERGEIST

While these deaths are without doubt tragic, they can primarily be attributed to natural causes and coincidence rather than any curse; more unfortunate coincidence than supernatural planning. Two further deaths contain far more intrigue, however.

Dominique Dunne was an actress whose career was beginning to take off. After appearances on television shows *Fame* and *Hart To Hart*, she gained her movie break playing the Freeling's eldest daughter Dana. While still only a relatively small role, it offered her the chance to work with Spielberg and Hooper, and on the back of the film's success she landed a crucial role in epic mini-series *V*. Dunne would never complete that part. While rehearsing her part with fellow cast member David Packer, Dunne's violent ex-boyfriend John Thomas Sweeney showed up and began to behave aggressively. In an attempt to calm him down, she agreed to speak with him alone on the porch of the property. Packer later reported that he heard fighting and after a failed attempt to alert the police, contacted a friend and rather disturbingly told them that if he was killed today then Sweeney was the killer. After sneaking out the back door, Packer found Sweeney hiding in some bushes. When the police finally did arrive, he confessed to killing his girlfriend. After a few days on life support, Dominique Dunne's family made the decision to switch off the machines after taking advice from doctors she was showing no noticeable signs of brain activity. Dominique Dunne was buried in Westwood Village Memorial Park Cemetery on November 6th and was just 22 years old. After pleading guilty and being convicted of voluntary manslaughter, Sweeney served only half of his six-and-a-half-year sentence, something still the subject of controversy even today.

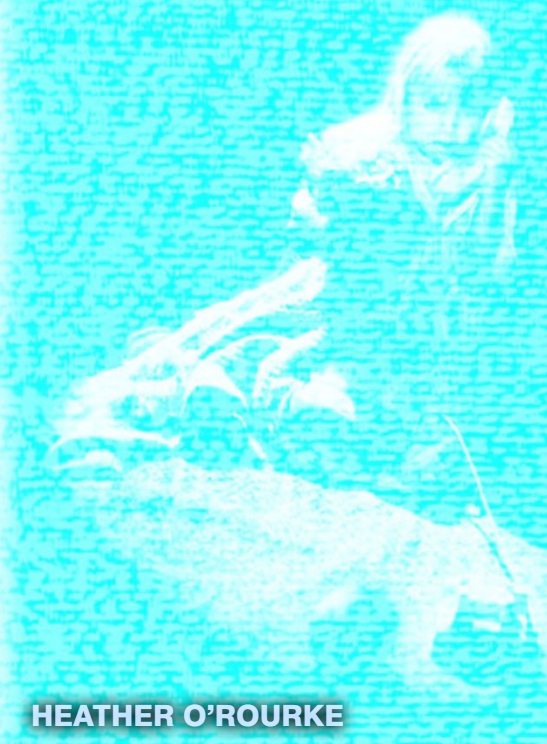
With the greatest respect to Dominique Dunne and the deaths of those about, the circumstances surrounding that of Heather O'Rourke have caught the public's imagination more than any other and have fuelled the Curse Theorists.

Having been misdiagnosed in 1987 with Crohn's disease, an inflammatory bowel disease, that while acutely painful and incurable, is not, theoretically life-threatening, O'Rourke was prescribed a course of cortisone. For many sufferers, the condition can lapse for years, even decades and with the right environment and treatment can be successfully managed. In January of the following year, though, she became very ill again, vomiting and experiencing severe stomach cramps. The next morning, as she was about to be taken to the hospital, O'Rourke collapsed, and her family immediately called the paramedics. While en-route to the hospital she also suffered cardiac arrest and despite being resuscitated, died later that day on the operating table. Initially mixed reports claimed that O'Rourke had died of influenza, but records state the cause of death being a horrendous combination; septic shock brought on by her intestinal problems that led to cardiac arrest. On February 5th, 1988, Heather O'Rourke was interred at Westwood Village Memorial Park Cemetery, the same as Dominique Dunne.

Following her death, O'Rourke's family launched a lawsuit against her doctors citing wrongful death caused by misdiagnosis, and while the hospital's representatives contested any wrongdoing, the case was settled out of court. Marketing of *Poltergeist III* was kept to a minimum due to fears over criticism that the filmmakers would be exploiting her death, and the release was dedicated to her memory.

So what to make of the curse itself?

While it would seem there is enough evidence for many fans to put faith in the fact that one exists at all, some of the theories are even more extreme than the horrific events themselves. One version of the story claims that one of the three Freeling children died after the release of



HEATHER O'ROURKE

each film, and in very specific ways; one murdered, one killed in a car crash and one by a mysteriously unidentified and incurable disease. Though two elements of this are curiously close to the truth, it would surely come as an immense surprise to Oliver Robins, the very much alive actor who portrayed Robbie Freeling in *Poltergeist* and *Poltergeist II*. While his film career may not have been as successful as he would have hoped (Robins actually left the acting business for a while in 1986 and has made little of real note since returning) there is nothing in his history even close to a fatal car crash as this legend suggests. Interestingly, though, there are rumours of strange events on set that were definitely more sinister. In *Poltergeist*, Robins' character is attacked by a clown doll whose arms are wrapped around the young actor's neck. At the time of filming, the crew including Spielberg himself thought Robins was delivering the performance of his life, not realising he was actually fighting for it and beginning to choke for real as the arms became entangled. Fortunately, the director realised just in time and tragedy was averted. Simple bad luck? Probably, although again it seems to add further interest to the curse legend.

There is another, more extreme telling which reports that all the cast members are now dead. Given that Craig T. Nelson (Mr Freeling) has had a long and distinguished career that includes *The Incredibles* and long-running television series *Coach*, and that JoBeth Williams is the current President of the Screen Actors Guild Foundation, this theory carries little weight indeed. What does have some credence are other reports from the sets of the films; reports that do hint at a supernatural presence.

One of the most famous scenes in *Poltergeist* takes place in The Freelings' backyard; or more accurately, in their swimming pool. The film's story revolves around the fact that the estate where the unfortunate family resides was once the location of a cemetery, and in relocating that cemetery the spirits of the dead have been disturbed; and nothing is angrier than a disturbed spirit. During a particularly damp evening, Diane Freeling becomes trapped in the pool as water and mud suck her in, and there she is attacked by skeletons. Rumours have always circulated about these scenes but in a recent interview JoBeth Williams has revealed that Spielberg used real skeletons in some of the shots. This 'real' desecration of the dead certainly gives further credence to the curse, at the very least giving it a starting point.

In the same interview, Williams also talks of Sampson performing some kind of exorcism on set while filming *Poltergeist II*. As Sampson was a deeply spiritual man, and someone with a strong belief in the power of blessings and tokens, this may not seem strange or unusual in itself, but Williams does confirm that an unmistakeable peace descended on the production in the following weeks.

There are many other reports from film sets and productions being dogged by strange events and supposed curses. Director James Wan says that while making *The Conjuring*, his dog would growl at an empty space on the other side of the room and could not be calmed down, as if an invisible entity was present. *The Matrix* movies contain numerous reports of 'bad luck' and also talk of a curse, with one example being the untimely death of Aaliyah in a plane crash while in the middle of filming her role. While filming the remake of *The Amityville Horror* in 2005, star Ryan Reynolds reports that many of the cast and crew would wake at 3.15am every night, the actual time of the murders that inspired the haunted house story.

All these stories and many more like them are terrible, tragic and often unexplained, but it is the *Poltergeist* series that remain at the front of most people's minds if asked to think of a cinematic curse. Perhaps it's the image of Heather O'Rourke as the hauntingly angelic Carol Anne that most stirs the memory? Maybe it's that a film about a family haunted by a malevolent spirit so reflected events in real life as if the explanation of unfortunate coincidences just wasn't enough? What is certain is that no other film or film series has generated as much interest and conjecture as *Poltergeist*.

Whatever you believe, whatever you might think, it's hard to argue against the strangeness of the facts. One way or another, it seems The Curse of *Poltergeist* may actually be real after all.

POLTERGEIST haunts UK screens from May 22nd

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INDEPENDENTS DAY

by Paul Mount

DANIEL FALICKI

This month INDEPENDENTS DAY talks to a prolific American director whose fervour and determination make him a name to watch out for. His film AEON: THE LAST VAMPYRE ON EARTH has been received well, and he's just finished off his latest project THE ACCIDENTAL EXORCIST. STARBURST caught up with DANIEL FALICKI to quiz him on his work...

Five years ago, Michigan-based Daniel Falicki was an ambitious film fan who, as he'd admit, didn't know one end of a camera from another. Fast-forward to 2014 and he's directed seven modestly-budgeted independent genre films including **All The Devil's Aliens**, **Awaken The Devil**, **3.33 AM** and the currently in-production **An Accidental Exorcist**. In 2013's **Aeon: The Last Vampyre On Earth**, Daniel appears as a centuries-old vampire trapped underground with the last survivor of the human race after the world has been destroyed by some nameless apocalypse. We described the movie as "a vampire film with real bite" and we recently caught up with Daniel to find out a little bit more about the life and work of this ferociously enthusiastic young director...

STARBURST: How did you first get involved in the world of filmmaking?
Daniel Falicki: It all started a few years ago after I got divorced and I moved into an apartment complex and a neighbour of mine asked me if I did wedding videos as I had a cheap DV video camera. I told him I didn't, but he said he had a friend who was getting married and wanted to hire someone who could film the wedding. I gave it a go, filmed this wedding and found I liked doing it. I edited it all together on a really cheap software programme and started doing a few more wedding videos. Then two of my friends opened up a local theatre and they wanted to do a commercial reel with these two comedians so I did it, edited it and it became my first attempt at filming a comedy sketch. I kept doing more weddings and more of these videos and then this strange health supplement company making health supplements that don't work called me up – they'd seen my wedding video ad on *craigslist* – and asked me if I could do commercials for them for the internet. I said 'I've never made a commercial before but I can give it a shot' and they said, 'That's what we like to hear!' I met with the owner and he liked me, so he hired me on the spot and he asked me if I knew anything about Chroma Key [green screen] which I didn't

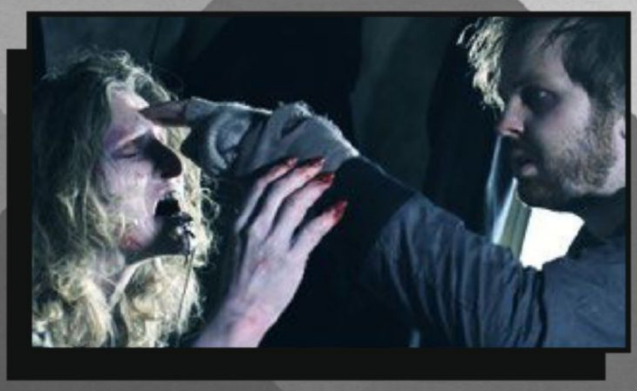
– back then I thought it was some sort of clock manufactured by NASA that had all these microchips in it! But they actually paid me to learn. I went in and I had my own cubicle, and God bless YouTube because I found videos by a twelve-year-old kid online which taught me how to green screen. I started learning, got hooked, and ended up making a bunch of commercials for them.

What was your first attempt at making what we might call a 'proper' film?
In 2010, I made my first movie, which was called *GR30k – Grand Rapids in the Year Thirty Thousand*. It was my tribute to the movie *Heavy Metal*, which I loved so much when I was a kid - it was like the first movie you watch that you don't tell your mom and dad about! My film was all rotoscoped. Ralph Bakshi was one of my idols and he pioneered the rotoscope. I just filmed everyone in front of the green screen, made them look animated, put in my own Photoshopped backgrounds and it became a four-segment movie very much in the tradition of *Heavy Metal*. It's a lot of fun. It turned out to be bigger than expected and, as a result, there was quite a lot of buzz and hype about it in my hometown and it ended up as the first movie played at Michigan's Thriller! Chiller! Film Festival in 2010. It played to a sold out crowd; got a huge response, and then later a friend of a friend of someone else – James Cullen Bressack from California, he'd directed *Hate Crime* and *Theatre of the Deranged* amongst others (see **Independents Day #405**) – saw it and asked about Joseph Scott Anthony, one of my actors. Two days later, he gave me a call and said, 'I watched your movie and it's insane!' That in turn led towards Reality Entertainment whose owner, Warren Croyle, rang me up and said he loved the film, asked me how much I made it for – and I told him I did it pretty much by myself with 69 actors for about three thousand bucks! Warren said he wanted to distribute it under a new title (*Future World: City of Mass Destruction*) and soon after that he made me an offer. He asked me what I did for a living and I told him I did different things, job to job, a bit of contract work here and there. He said 'Would you like to make movies for me?' and within a month of working for him we shot *The Last Vampyre*.

***Aeon: The Last Vampyre* was co-written by Warren. Presumably he shares your passion and enthusiasm for low-budget indie movies?**
Oh yeah, Warren likes low budget and so do I. I just believe that if you have a bunch of your friends who know what they're doing when it comes to movies and a decent script you can do anything. In 2013 at Michigan's Blue Water Film Festival, Ellen Burstyn was a guest and she said much the same thing; if you've got friends and a camera, it doesn't matter what it is, if you've got a story - just make it. It was a really beautiful speech. That's one question that really bugs me when I've done a film: "What did you film it on?" and I'll always say 'A camera!" I always have a brilliant cinematographer and we turn a lot of heads, but I'm an old-fashioned guy, I don't like things to be too bright and shiny and new. I just like to get the job done and I just like to use equipment that does it.

Tell us a bit about the shooting of *Aeon* and how you came to star in the film.
It was shot in a big-ass warehouse space which was recently bought by one of my friends who had owned a humungous haunted house, and this was the year they got to clear out all their stuff. They gave me the keys to the place as I was working for them doing commercial work so I always had access to it. The film took us nine days to shoot. It was freakin' cold in that warehouse! We took a lot of risks making the movie. I did my own make-up, brought in one of my friends from Detroit for one day and he did an astounding job for the make-up on the scene when I'm sitting on top of this weird metal coffin thing and I was like 'Holy shit that looks amazing!' I got to play Aeon myself because I've been a fan of villains ever since I was a kid. I was the guy who always wanted the action figures

ACCIDENTAL EXORCIST



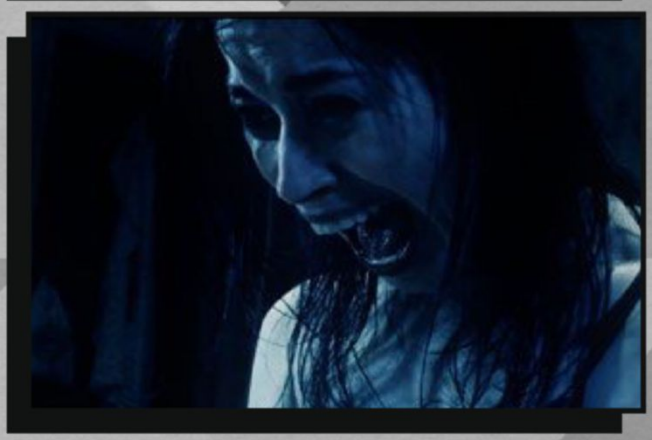
of the bad guys! The bad guys are just way more interesting and Aeon was an especially dark and different character. I was worried if we got some other actor in it would take us years and I'd really piss him off by pulling a load of Stanley Kubrick tricks on him so I took the role mainly to speed up the process of making the film, but also because I thought the character was really fascinating and because I thought I could do it justice.

We were struck by the fact that although Aeon's a vampire and he's clearly done terrible things, he's not just a monster. He's a thinking creature with views and opinions and in some ways he's a bit of a philosopher...
That's exactly it. He comes full circle with himself. He's always sizing up people, he's the greatest species, he's so intelligent, and he's high and mighty. He calls people apes or chimps because he believes his species is superior. But he's still a monster capable of terrible, horrible things such as when Catherine locks herself in the storage cage and he's going ape-shit because he can't get access to her. But for all his intelligence he still wants to frighten her and gross her out so he craps in his hand and he throws it at her! He becomes everything that he hates because he's starving, he's poisoned himself by drinking dead blood, he's deteriorating more and more and he's becoming desperate and in that desperation he becomes what he hates.

As Catherine, the last human trapped with the last vampyre, April Basile makes a real impression. Where did you find her?
She was just this very free-spirited girl who worked at a popular bar downtown, I think she was one of the supervisors. She was always into acting and I'd seen her from time to time when we had film gatherings and showcases once a year. She liked my stuff and told me she could act and do make-up too. She was my first choice because finding a girl here who looks pretty is easy, but it's more difficult to find someone who is pretty but wants to look ugly. Acting is a vanity, people like to see themselves as someone they're not but there are a lot of people who have a hang-up about nudity and playing gross and I told her there were times when I was going to puke stuff on her and fling brownie mix at her and she was going to have shit on her face, but she went 'Hey, no problem', and we did it. She was awesome, even though that warehouse was freezing cold. For half the movie, she was wearing this skimpy dress and she was half-frozen!

Time must be tight on a nine-day shooting schedule. Was there anything you just didn't have time to film?
There was one scene I wanted to do where, towards the end, when I look more and more decrepit, the worst I could ever look, she was supposed to fall asleep and the vampire shows up in her dreams as my true self. The idea was to emphasise the seductiveness of vampires, not the stupid-ass sparkling *Twilight* shit. I would have come up to her in the dream to seduce her and try to have sex, and she gets into it a little bit and then, when she's really in the moment, her eyes open up and I'm right on top of her and I am just absolutely decrepit, like *The Elephant Man*. My shirt's off, I have all these sores, I look like the old woman in Room 237 in Kubrick's *The Shining*. That's when she gets scared, knocks me off and runs. I really wanted to do that scene, it would have been great.

The first twenty minutes of the film are virtually dialogue-free. That's not something you're likely to see in a major studio big budget Hollywood blockbuster. Would you like to move into the big-budget arena and try to subvert it?
I love that first twenty minutes! It's just Catherine, you follow her around; you solve the clues along with her. My boss Warren gives me a lot of artistic freedom - much more than I'd get in Hollywood where the stakes are higher - but in the end this was his story so I tried to make it as good as possible. I suppose I'd like to break into Hollywood, but I'd still like to be the rebellious asshole who develops a cult following, a bit like Tarantino who's the rebellious dude when it comes to the Weinsteins, but I guess they give him the freedom to do whatever he wants. I'd like to be the kind of director who can write, direct, and edit and have a major studio pay for it.



Not be on a contract for someone who says 'Make me *Fast and Furious 10*' or whatever. But then I don't really know; I mean, I've never had a million-dollar cheque handed to me, so I'm not qualified to say yet.

What did you learn as a filmmaker from the experience of making *The Last Vampyre*?
I learned that pretty much when it's a team effort it takes more time, and it also teaches you to learn to trust people. I did my first movie all by myself and because everything was post-production all I had to do was green screen and that was it, I didn't need a crew for that. So it taught me to trust other people and their talents. A lot of people were surprised by *Last Vampyre*. This is not a movie that is my taste because it's very wordy and philosophical. I'm a fan of stupid cult fun action films, like *The Evil Dead*. When it comes to something like this, people were just wowed by the fact I'd made it!

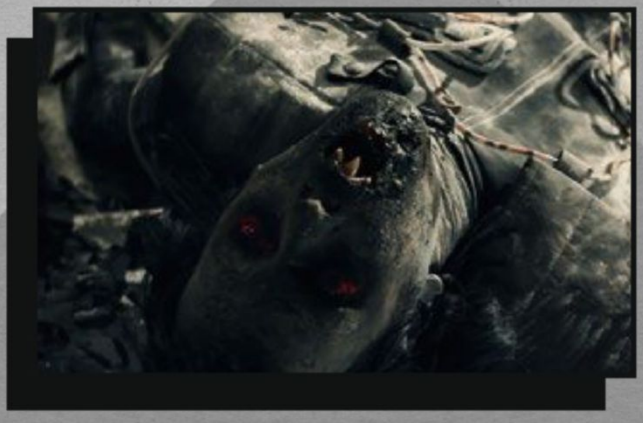
What do you think of modern mainstream horror movies?
Horror movies today don't scare you, they startle you. Whenever something scary happens, you have this musical sting or a sound effect. The sting is supposed to scare you with the image, but I wish you could just have the scary part with no sound or music, I think that's far more terrifying. I also miss build-up. Today's horror movies have to be around 90 minutes, there's no such thing as character development and if there is then people say 'it's too slow'. But I think you need to care more about the characters because the story's more epic that way. Hollywood today is obsessed with 3D and HD and smell-o-vision or whatever... I think I'm in trouble!

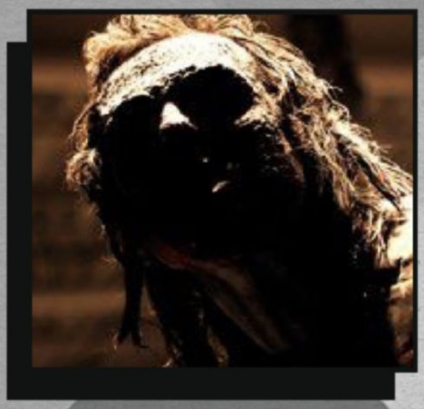
You've been pretty busy since *Last Vampyre* with another half-dozen films either finished or in production. Where do you see yourself in five or ten years' time?
Yeah, we made six more movies after that. I pumped out about four movies the year after *Last Vampyre*, so we definitely have a momentum! It's sort of like a collection of work. I never went to film school, never had any desire to! I am known locally as the village idiot who makes eight films in two years, so who's laughing now? I love it, it's always a new adventure, I only started this about five years ago, so in five or so years I want to see myself still doing this; to maybe own my own studio. A studio can be like a wonderland, it's a place where I'd like to make old-school stuff like Alfred Hitchcock. I want my own big-ass space. I want to do this for a living, to be comfortable. I don't want to be a millionaire, I just want to keep doing this and have fun and not have to worry about being kicked out of my apartment!

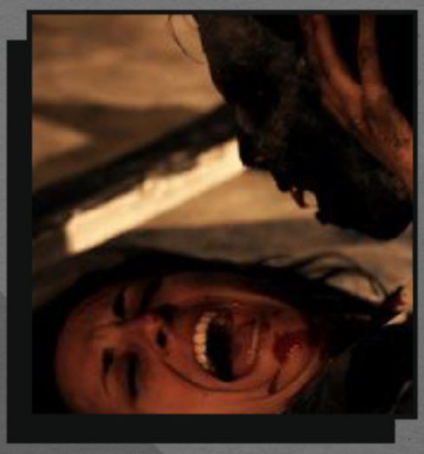
Your work ethic seems to pretty much sum up the spirit of indie cinema. What advice would you give someone with a craving to make movies but no access to a hundred million Hollywood dollars?
Anybody can do this. Start by making something short, five minutes or whatever, but make it damned impressive and then people will come and they'll say 'I like what you did'. That's what I did. I made stuff by myself, people started watching it, and then you progress to a feature and then another one and slowly people get to know you and they want to help. All I can say is – at first, if you don't have friends who want to help, make it yourself. Never be afraid. It's a short film, all you need is a camera.

AEON: THE LAST VAMPYRE ON EARTH, as well as several of Daniel's other movies, is available now on DVD from Sector 5 films.

AEON: THE LAST VAMPYRE ON EARTH







REVIEW:

AEON: THE LAST VAMPYRE ON EARTH

MOVIE REVIEW: AEON: THE LAST VAMPYRE ON EARTH / CERT: TBC / DIRECTOR: DANIEL FALICKI / SCREENPLAY: WARREN CROYLE, RYAN LIESKE / STARRING: APRIL BASILE, DANIEL FALICKI, CHRIS EDDY / RELEASE DATE: TBC

Expectations aren't likely to be too high for *Aeon: The Last Vampyre on Earth*, shot on a budget of $1 million with just one main location and two cast members dominating the screen for most of its ninety-odd minute running time. But director/actor Falicki isn't interested in visual wham-bam; his film is a surprisingly gripping two-hander which discusses the nature and purpose of humanity, existential angst, religion and, unless I'm very much mistaken, the chances of Manchester United winning the FA Cup (and I think I very probably am mistaken on that one). This ain't no action film; this is a movie which uses the idea of one human being and one vampire – the last vampyre, if you will – to consider the meaning of life and the point of it all as they represent the last of their respective species in a world coming to an end. A barrel of laughs, it isn't.

As some unspecified cataclysm ravages the Earth, Catherine Murnau (Basile) stumbles into a gloomy warehouse which has been the prison of a scorched, crippled creature called Aeon (Falicki). With humanity fallen, Aeon seizes the opportunity to indulge himself by engaging the terrified Murnau in a lengthy, detailed debate about human nature, the meaning of life, the place and purpose of religion in a now Godless, wiped-out world. Murnau, for her part, finds herself defending her dead species and trying to justify Mankind's existence and the spirit of humanity and all it's ever believed in and achieved even as the planet falls to pieces around them.

It's not difficult to imagine Aeon as some low-key agitprop stage production; it's certainly a script which would lend itself well to the intimacy of live performance and yet, despite its lack of incident and its verbosity, it works well as a movie. There's always something compelling and fascinating about two people arguing from diametrically opposed viewpoints and never more so than when one of them is a frightened human and the other is a cynical undead monster that has lived too long and experienced too much. Trapped and decaying, Aeon is never a real threat to Murnau except on an intellectual level; her determination and ability to counter his relentless nihilism and maintain her humanity in the face of his ferocious, desperate hunger and the extinction of her species gives the movie a dynamism and drive which is never dampened by its lack of incident and spectacle. Aeon himself, charred and ruined, is a vampyre torn from our worst Gothic nightmares and even when Murnau tries to quite literally crush his physical essence towards the end of the movie, the last vampyre still won't surrender to the inevitable. It's as if he refuses to become extinct until Murnau, the very last human, is gone and the human race is finally no more and his point is proven.

Aeon: The Last Vampyre on Earth deftly defies the limitations of its minuscule budget and presents a bleak and yet potent examination of both the fragility and the enduring strength of the human spirit in the most extreme and fantastical of situations. Wordy, claustrophobic and stifling, *Aeon* is a vampyre film with real bite and a timely reminder that there's still more to the undead in the movies than Robert Pattinson's bloodless antics.

REVIEWS

THE LATEST BIG SCREEN GENRE RELEASES REVIEWED AND RATED

AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON

CERT:12A / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: JOSS WHEDON / STARRING: ROBERT DOWNEY JR., CHRIS EVANS, CHRIS HEMSWORTH, MARK RUFFALO, SCARLETT JOHANSSON, JAMES SPADER, AARON TAYLOR-JOHNSON, ELIZABETH OLSEN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Avengers are finally back and this time, thankfully, they already come pre-assembled, assaulting a Hydra base in 'Sokovia', home to Baron von Strucker, introduced in the post-credits sequence of Captain America: The Winter Soldier. If you didn't understand any of that sentence then A) nice of you to come out from under that rock and B) this film is not going to explain who these people are or what's going on for you and there's not enough room here to do so.

Captain America, Iron Man, Thor, Black Widow, Hawkeye and a (mostly) tame Hulk are in search of Loki's 'pokey stick' from the first Avengers film and once the mission is complete, Tony Stark and Bruce Banner have a few days to examine Loki's spear to see if it can be of any use to their 'Ultron' project – Tony's vision to protect the world from another invasion on the scale of the Chitauri one from the previous film. Predictably enough, things soon go awry and the Avengers have to deal with a rogue artificial intelligence, loose on the Internet and in multiple drone bodies, with Loki's spear in its possession and one goal: force humanity to adapt to change or eliminate it.

Writer/director Joss Whedon then takes the audience on a spin around the Marvel Cinematic Universe and the characters' relationships, with tensions fraying within the group thanks to both Tony's actions and a little meddling from the Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen), introduced along with her speedster brother Pietro/Quicksilver (Taylor-Johnson). Along the way there are stops for the Hulkbuster Iron Man vs. Hulk fight we've all been waiting for, an examination of Hawkeye, and, yes, a deepening of the relationship between Black Widow and Bruce Banner/The Hulk, with plenty of murderbot vs. Avengers punch-ups along the way.

The real question everyone wants to know the answer to is "has Marvel finally messed up", and based upon this and the superlative Netflix Daredevil series, Marvel are more on form than ever. Whedon lets his geek flag fly, adding neat little touches like giving the team some neat new 'tag-team' manoeuvres and dropping in characters from all the main casts' back histories, either simply as chums popping by to party or help out, or as part of Scarlet Witch-induced hallucinations. There are also some intriguing hints dropped about the future: who is the 'missing person' that Falcon is looking for? What is 'Wakanda'? Whedon is also probably one of the few writers who could drop a joke about American playwright Eugene O'Neill into a movie about mad scientists, gods, monsters and evil robots battering each other half to death.

The fight scenes are excellent, peppered with fantastically funny banter, all the relationships between the cast evolve (it's a lot more nuanced and a lot less dark than the trailers make things appear) and best of all, Whedon lets James Spader run riot as Ultron. Spader lends Ultron his ultra-sardonic tone, superior and petulant, the genocidal robot providing the perfect adversary that requires the Avengers to work together to defeat. The rest of the main cast ARE their characters by now and feel completely natural, with very little feeling forced to enable Ultron's creation without Hank Pym, or to put things in place for 2016's Captain America: Civil War. Olsen and Taylor-Johnson fit in nicely, and even if only in a small role, it's great to see Don Cheadle's Rhodes or Anthony Mackie's Falcon, amongst many others, pop up. Whedon must have felt a deep debt to Renner for spending most of the first film brainwashed as he gets a great deal more to do here, with lots of added background, but there's still not an awful lot of character yet.

The ending of the film doesn't massively change the franchise but pieces are set in motion for the future; the Avengers are finally aware that something is going on with the Infinity Stones (and it's confirmed that Loki's spear does indeed hold the 'Mind' stone), Thanos is going to have to get up off his ass if he wants all the stones and there's a very compelling reason why one of the stones will be remaining in close proximity to the Avengers. All this and no mention of the rumoured creation of The Vision? Needless to say, it works in the context of the film, if coming off a little rushed and looking a little odd, but it does work. Oh, and there is only a mid-credits sting, nothing after the credits.

Big, bold, fun.

Your move, DC.

IAIN MCNALLY

EXPECTED 9

ACTUAL 9

A GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: ANA LILY AMIRPOUR / STARRING: SHEILA VAND, ARASH MARANDI, MARSHALL MANESH / RELEASE DATE: MAY 22ND

Of all the preconceptions and expectations that you may have about Iranian cinema, you are unlikely to expect an Iranian film to be indescribably cool. A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night is an achingly hip take on the vampire movie; forged from Western influences, but strikingly original and a million times more romantic, horrific and even youthful than Twilight.

Completely rejecting the idea that a girl walking home alone at night is in some kind of danger, Ana Lily Amirpour's debut feature has its James Dean-modelled hero Arash roaming the streets and looking just as vulnerable as any of the female characters. Making ends meet by gardening at a luxury mansion, Arash has saved up for a car but is forced to give up his precious vehicle when his father's drug dealer Saeed comes looking for the money he is owed. Meanwhile, a mysterious sexy hijab-clad vampire prowls the streets looking for prey, skateboarding her way to iconic status like a cross between a femme fatale and Batman.

A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night knows exactly how cool it is, appearing to effortlessly sink its teeth into pop culture and cinematic influences. From its attractive young cast, to its sparse dialogue, gorgeous monochrome photography and fantastic soundtrack, it has all the boxes ticked for cult status. This is revolutionary Iranian cinema; not concerned with social realism, but far more interested in creating an unsettling, at times comical, mood. Often it feels as though you are watching a super-cool music video, its characters meandering aimlessly, but looking damn fine doing it. The story may wander, but the moody tone is ruthlessly controlled.

The vampire is the most alluring aspect of the film, with the male characters all emerging as frightened, needy men. She is a sinister but alluring creature and the film's sudden turn into horror is arresting, unexpected and crowd pleasing. Sheila Vand strikes a perfect balance between vulnerable, vain, potential victim and poised snake, ready to pounce, fangs unleashed. The effects are subtle and the violence restrained, but it all adds to the surreal atmosphere.

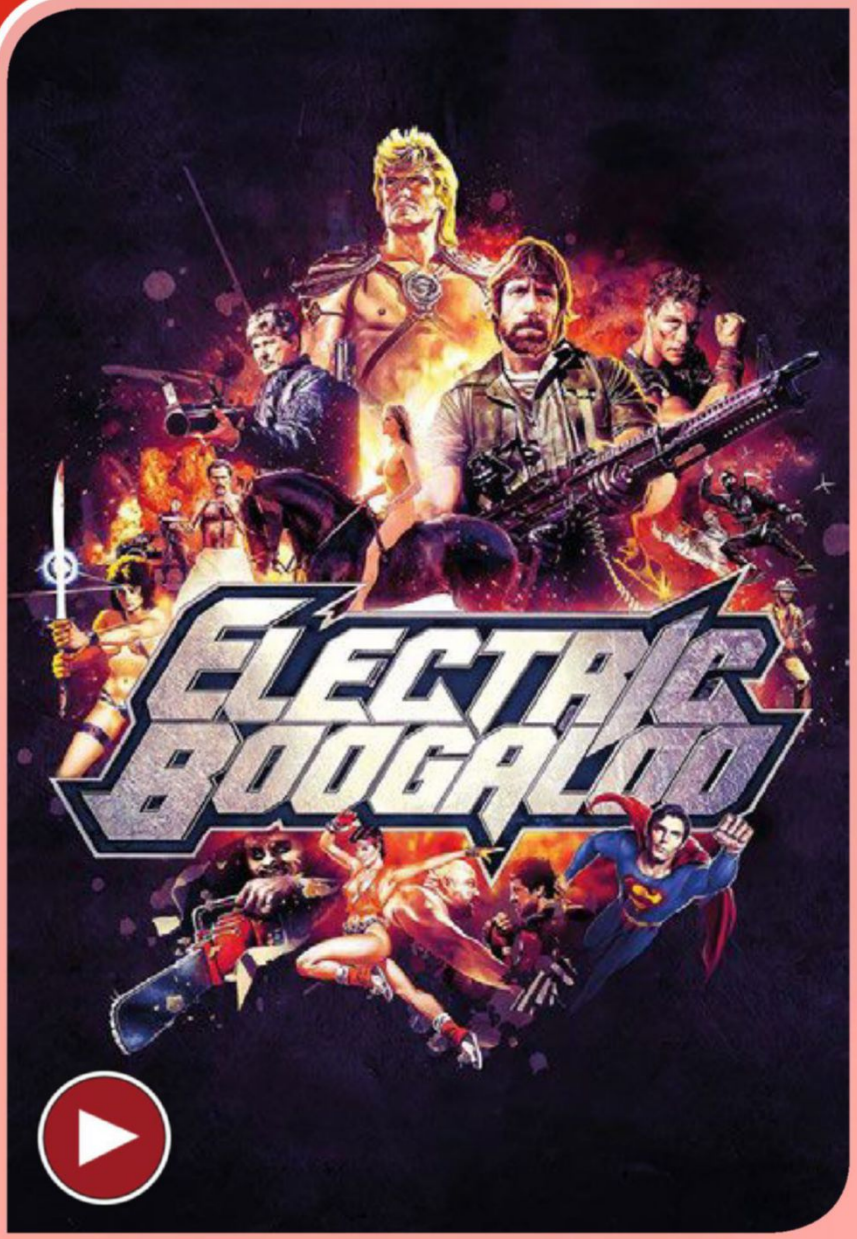
The parallels with Jim Jarmusch's recent Only Lovers Left Alive are hard to ignore, but A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night is clearly its own beast. The eerie sound design and imposing industrial landscapes recall David Lynch's Eraserhead, though there is nothing as weird as hamster-faced women hiding behind radiators here. Amirpour shows an astounding command of audio and visuals, with the edgy indie vibe never over-egged, and every frame meticulously maintaining the at times oppressive and menacing and at other times liberating, vibrant mood.

From Arash's costume to other Americana references, this is a film breaking free of its Iranian roots. A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night features a wonderful cultural mishmash of music, arthouse and genre elements. It certainly marks Amirpour as a deliciously talented director to watch out for. Just hope that her take on the vampire lives on far longer than those (un)bloody Twilight movies.

PETE TURNER

EXPECTED 6

ACTUAL 9



ELECTRIC BOOGALOO: THE WILD, UNTOLD STORY OF CANNON FILMS

CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: MARK HARTLEY / STARRING: MENAHEM GOLAN, YORAM GLOBUS, SAM FIRSTENBERG, DAVID PAULSEN, SYBIL DANNING / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 5TH

For anyone who came of cinematic age during the heady days of cheesy 1980s film, Electric Boogaloo: The Wild, Untold Story of Cannon Films - the new documentary by Australian writer/director Mark Hartley - will be like a nostalgic blast of fresh air in today's world of PC-obsessed blockbusters.

With help from a galaxy of stars - ranking everywhere on the scale from A to Z - Electric Boogaloo charts the career ups and downs of filmmakers Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus, who changed the face of modern cinema as we now know it. The Israeli cousins, who clearly made films because of their straightforward love for the medium, had one aim: to provide audiences with entertainment, pure and simple; as opposed to many of today's movie hotshots who often appear to have ulterior motives behind their productions.

Cannon Films, the ailing production company which Golan and Globus bought in 1979 and proceeded to rejuvenate during the following decade, were never known for a particularly high-end product - they had been responsible for such dubious dramas as 1971's Maid in Sweden and 1976's Northville Cemetery Massacre. However, under the guidance of Golan and Globus - who were as much showmen as they were professional filmmakers - the company began to do something which it hadn't been doing before, namely make money. Launching the careers of many high profile Hollywood stars - without the help of Cannon Films the world would probably not have become aware of Dolph Lundgren and Chuck Norris - the company was also responsible for such cult films as 1985's sci-fi vampire epic Lifeforce as well as milestones in the fantastic film genre like 1987's Masters of the Universe. In Electric Boogaloo, an endless stream of iconic names, including actors Mimi Rogers, Bo Derek, Elliott Gould and Martine Beswick along with director Tobe Hooper, queue up to reminisce in both glowing and not-so-flattering terms about their memories of working with the company.

The cinema-going public are however, on the whole, a fickle bunch, and the days when everything these celluloid magicians touched seemed, for a while anyway, to turn to box office (if not critical) gold, were numbered. Audiences began to lose interest in films whose production values appeared unable to keep up with the times. As the youngsters who had grown up with Cannon's films began to become more sophisticated, they also became increasingly turned off by the company's dodgy effects and slapstick gore and violence. Eventually, by the early 1990s, Cannon had folded, whilst Golan and Globus themselves had gone their separate ways, each pursuing other avenues in both film and television production.

The fact that Golan and Globus refused to take part in Electric Boogaloo - they were co-operating at the time of its production with a rival documentary on their careers - may be interpreted in one of two ways. Either their lack of involvement could portray the film as a scandalous piece of muck-raking on two men whose only crime was to bring pleasure to countless millions of movie goers, whilst providing some of the most iconic and enduring, though not necessarily erudite, moments in cinema history, or the absence of any input from two such strong characters - who would most likely have believed that they should have had some degree of control over the direction of the finished film - could be seen as playing in Hartley's favour; if a documentary has no participation from its subjects it allows a filmmaker the possibility of taking a middle-of-the-road, and hopefully unbiased, approach to the story around which their project revolves, resulting in a more rounded and honest final product. Whether Hartley achieves this with Electric Boogaloo may be open to conjecture. There's no denying, however, that, like Cannon's films themselves, the end product is a wonderful, if perhaps slightly trashy, piece of fun.

CLEAVER PATTERSON

EXPECTED ++++++++++ 7

ACTUAL ++++++++++ 10

MOOMINS ON THE RIVIERA

CERT: U / DIRECTOR: XAVIER PICARD, HANNA HEMILÄ / SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: KRISTOFER GUMMERUS, MATS LÅNGBACKA, MARIA SID, ALMA PÖYSTI / RELEASE DATE: MAY 22ND

Moomins on the Riviera sees Moomin (Gummerus), his parents Moominpappa (Långbacka) and Moominmamma (Sid) and a group of his friends take a trip to discover the delights of the French Riviera. However they soon find out that the reality is not as it looks in the glossy magazines they read at home, leading them to question whether the lifestyle of the rich and famous is all it's cracked up to be.

The Moomins - the half hippopotamus/half troll-like creatures that inhabit an imaginary valley somewhere in, or near, Finland - have always been divisive where public opinion is concerned: you either love them or hate them, and there has never been much room for middle-ground. Anyone with their feet too firmly planted in reality will most likely not get them. To fully appreciate these imaginary creatures, and their wide circle of equally bizarre friends, you have to have a taste for the strange, as happy living in the realms of fantasy and make-believe as you are in the everyday world.

Saying that, even those who love them will often admit to finding them unsettling too - there's a side to them that is just a little bit 'creepy'. Which is what has made Moomintroll, his parents Moominpappa and Moominmamma, his girlfriend Snorkmaiden and their friends so appealing, since they first appeared in author Tove Jansson's bestselling books in 1945. The best characters from children's literature and those which stand the test of time often have an 'edginess' to them or the adventures in which they find themselves. The inhabitants of Moominvalley, where Jansson's characters lived, were no exception, frequently at their strongest when facing dangers and everyday predicaments within the boundaries of their own wild and haunting homeland.

Which is why, and where, this new animated big screen adventure slips up. The strongest aspects of Moomins on the Riviera take place at the beginning and end of the film, bookending the slower and less imaginary middle segment which chronicles the family's trip to the South of France. There is plenty of fun throughout the film; the humour, though clearly aimed at younger audiences, has a sophisticated enough undercurrent to appeal to older sensibilities as well; the characterisation of the snooty and arrogant individuals who people the Côte d'Azur is marvelously realised and, one feels, probably disturbingly true to real-life. However, the opening scenes, which - apart from introducing the impish character of Little My, who featured frequently in the Moomin adventures - seem to have little or nothing to do with the central story, are also the most intriguing and memorable, particularly for older viewers who may want to watch the film for purely nostalgic reasons.

Though the beautiful and sparsely-rendered animation by production companies Handle Productions, Pictak and Moomin Characters lends itself perfectly to the darker aspects of the story, overall Moomins on the Riviera is too true to life to capture the otherworldliness which made Jansson's creations so magical.

CLEAVER PATTERSON

EXPECTED 8

ACTUAL 6

REVIEWS

THE LATEST HOME VIDEO RELEASES REVIEWED AND RATED

INTO THE WOODS

DVD + BD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: ROB MARSHALL / SCREENPLAY: JAMES LAPINE / STARRING: MERYL STREEP, EMILY BLUNT, JAMES CORDEN, ANNA KENDRICK, CHRIS PINE, JOHNNY DEPP / RELEASE DATE: MAY 18TH

Disney's latest effort is an adaptation of a Brothers Grimm tale, itself already adapted to a play. Oh, and it's a musical. Most definitely a musical. As in songs. Lots and lots and lots of them. So this isn't quite your usual STARBURST affair, but the twisted plot of the film still has plenty to offer for genre fans.

The basic premise of *Into the Woods* sees famed stories of yesteryear all brought together and intertwined with the tale of a baker (Corden) and his wife (Blunt) who will do anything to start a family, despite a witch (Streep) having placed a curse on their loins. In terms of the familiar aspects of the picture, there are plays on *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Cinderella*, and *Rapunzel*; all of which are woven into the greater narrative of a baker and his wife's mission to procreate. And did we mention there are songs?

In fairness, going into this film we were a little unsure as of what to expect. Admittedly though, we found our feet tap-tap-tapping away as soon as the opening number began to blurt out. The horror-loving, superhero-championing, sci-fi fan in us went in with stoic upper lip, expecting a traumatic experience similar to being serenaded by *Grease*'s Danny Zuko or having Abba songs thrown at us for 90 minutes. What we got was, yes lots of songs, but a beautifully crafted fantasy world that had a rich vibrancy and a macabre, Gothic charm reminiscent of Tim Burton at his best (remember when his movies were actually *good*?).

At the centre of the various yarns being unravelled, we have Meryl Streep doing wonders as the central witch with her fingers in plenty of pies. The rest of the cast all hit the right notes (pun most definitely intended), with particular praise going to young Lilla Crawford as Little Red Riding Hood and to Johnny Depp as a devilishly mischievous Wolf, even if Depp's character does come off as just a tad on the Jimmy Savile side of creepy. Oh, and Chris Pine sure can sing – James T. Kirk has certainly got some surprisingly impressive lungs on him!

Into the Woods does a great job of giving a unique look at some of the stories we've heard and seen many times before, and there's a freshness and dynamism to its centre-pieces and plot devices. It would also be remiss to not acknowledge the fantastic job done by James Lapine and Stephen Sondheim on the musical side of the film. As alluded to, we're generally not really ones for musicals, but Lapine and Sondheim deliver songs, score and a soundtrack that keep Into the Woods flowing as smoothly as Rapunzel's barnet.

All in all, despite being hesitant on what to expect from Into the Woods (did we mention there's lots and lots of songs?), Rob Marshall has delivered an impressive film that will have an appeal to many ages and to varying tastes. Quite the impressive feat.

ANDREW POLLARD

7

BAD LAND: ROAD TO FURY

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & JAKE PALTROW / STARRING: MICHAEL SHANNON, NICHOLAS HOULT, ELLE FANNING, KODI SMIT-MCPHEE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Bad Land: Road to Fury is set in a near future where everything has become barren wasteland and water has become the most precious and dwindling resource on the planet. The survivors of this catastrophe work night and day to get life back into the ground and start afresh again, but are willing to do bad things to achieve it. Ernest Holm (Shannon) lives on this harsh frontier with his two children, Jerome (Smit-McPhee), and Mary (Fanning). He works hard around the clock to defend his farm from bandits, whilst also working the supply routes, and hopes to rejuvenate the soil.

However, Mary's two-faced boyfriend, Flem Lever (Hoult), has bigger schemes of his own, as he wants Ernest's land all for himself, and will go to any lengths to get it.

From the look of the DVD cover, it has the face of a sci-fi/adventure movie, which is very misleading as the film is actually closer to a gritty, character-driven, post-apocalyptic drama. That sounds great, but the film suffers from taking too much time setting up significant characters and story arcs. The four main actors are the film's main focus, yet the supporting characters' only purpose for existing is to move the plot forward and complete open storylines. The movie goes at a somewhat normal pace, yet with the long, meandering shots, barren desert scenery and the melancholic mood that is felt throughout, audiences are going to think of the film as too much of a slow-burner and as a result, some people will find the whole experience quite boring after the first few minutes. This is a problem as, even though writer/director Jake Paltrow (brother of Gwyneth) tries to create compelling character arcs and storylines, they just end up becoming somewhat predictable and familiar. That's a shame since Giles Nuttgens' cinematography is gorgeous to look at, and the depiction of a barren post-apocalyptic world is convincingly realised and ingeniously inventive.

Despite not having much character development, the performances from the four main leads are pretty solid and don't hamper the film's drama in any dramatic way. Michael Shannon has always been a compelling and magnetic screen presence in everything he's done, and here he's again the major draw. However, he's absent too much to make any great impact, and that's a real shame seeing as the film loses its momentum whenever he's off-screen. Kodi Smit-McPhee plays yet another character living in a desolated world after both The Road and Dawn of the Planet of the Apes, yet he gives a nuanced and heartfelt performance, and has a really good rapport with Shannon. Nicholas Hoult is perfectly solid as the antagonist, however Elle Fanning is the one that's sadly (and majorly) side-lined here, and this is a real shame as Fanning is an extremely talented young actress that deserves a whole lot more than what she's given here.

Overall, Bad Land: Road to Fury boats solid performances, despite how little screen time some get, the cinematography is beautiful to watch, and the film has a good idea at the heart of it. However, the film itself feels rather limp and lumpen in its execution, and only ends up being somewhat disappointing as a result.

RYAN POLLARD

5

ISLAND OF DEATH (1976)

BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: NICO MASTORAKIS / SCREENPLAY: NICO MASTORAKIS / STARRING: ROBERT BEHLING, JANE LYLE, JESSICA DUBLIN / RELEASE DATE: MAY 25TH

Of all the Director of Public Prosecutions' notorious 39 outlawed videos, Island of Death was the most tasteless, controversial and depraved. Director, writer and producer Nico Mastorakis might have made the film purely for financial means, but it's since become one of the most lusted-after cult films and a definitive exploitation flick. And it's cleaned up pretty well on Blu-ray.

The film is overshadow by its chequered past, where it was notoriously cut to be passed X for its theatrical release, before being declined classification on home video on multiple occasions. No amount of cuts or title changes (Island of Perversion being our favourite) was going to slink around the censors. That was until 2010, where the BBFC finally gave up the goose and passed the film uncut. Since then, Mastorakis' nasty little masterpiece has enjoyed a renaissance and you don't feel half as dirty watching it.

The plot, what little of it makes sense, follows sibling lovers Christopher (Behling) and Celia (Lyle) who arrive from London to the Greek island of Mykonos. Christopher is a self-styled avenging angel, sent to punish the inhabitants for their perversions and sexual depravity. This amounts to provoking the locals into sex acts and then offing them in inventive and eye watering ways, taking photos all the while. Between them and the locals, an impressive rap sheet of violence and depravity soon adds up, from golden showers to bestiality and decapitation and much more besides.

Even before the killing spree gets underway, the cinematography lulls you in with inviting shots of the town with its white buildings, tight streets and twinkling seas. For all its media baiting antics, it's beautifully and confidently shot. Mastorakis was uncredited as cinematographer alongside Nikos Gardelis, and between then they've created a postcard in motion. The bizarre soundtrack has weathered well, the folky infused songs adding a curious juxtaposition to the antics onscreen, with sly lyrics from Mastorakis himself.

The film may seem tame by today's standards, it's hardly torture porn, but the rape scenes in particular are still intensely visceral. Christopher ends up getting his comeuppance by the time the credits roll, but the motives, means and reasons behind his actions are ambiguous and largely amount to nothing. Island of Death is a curiosity, one that fans of exploitation should all see once. But with the extras included in Arrow's Blu-ray release, it's one you'll want to own too.

Extras: *Director-approved 2K restoration / Exploring Island of Death – film historian Stephen Thrower on the making of a cult classic / Return to Island of Death – the original Mykonos locations / Archive interview with director Mastorakis / Alternative opening titles / Island Sounds – five original tracks from the soundtrack / Trailer / The Films of Nico Mastorakis – four-part documentary /Nico Mastorakis Trailer Reel / Fully-illustrated collector's booklet.*

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

6

WHAT'S LEFT OF US

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: CHRISTOPH BEHL / STARRING: VICTORIA ALMEIDA, WILLIAM PROCIUK, LAUTARO DELGADO, LUCAS LAGRÉ / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

What you take from watching Christoph Behl's zombie film What's Left of Us will in many ways be determined by what you bring to it. Approaching this starkly realised vision of a dystopian future with any number of preconceptions determined by the bloated history of zombie films may render the experience frustratingly melancholic. Coming at Behl's film with an open mind, one ready to absorb a troublingly believable depiction of claustrophobic tension will be offered something entirely different. This is a movie that challenges the viewer to engage with characters in a situation horrifyingly understandable.

Ana (Almeida), her apparent boyfriend Jonathan (Prociuk) and their friend Axel (Delgado) are holed up in a barricaded apartment following a zombie holocaust, one that they presume has wiped out the rest of mankind. With dwindling supplies supplemented by occasional, necessary excursions outside, and unavoidably living in extremely close proximity, tensions inevitably begin to rise. The capture of a zombie and his subsequent presence causes further rifts in the friendship as the situation becomes increasingly untenable.

Behl's greatest achievement has been in placing the viewer right in the apartment with his trio of survivors, with the camera unflinching in its invasiveness as it observes their daily routine. At times it takes the viewpoint of one of the group, encouraging you to imagine what they are thinking, lending discomfort and reluctant judgement to the scene. At other times the camera seems to sit dispassionately in the corner, watching with cold voyeurism as tense interaction replaces the group's initial collective strength.

The performances themselves are spellbinding, creating the deep empathy required to appreciate the characters' situation while still struggling to fully understand their motives. Each has their own burden to bear, but their strained love for each other, which takes different, at times violent, forms over the duration of the film, binds them together into a dysfunctional family unit.

The characters' steady decline as they stumble along not knowing what the future may hold reflects the decay that is central to Behl's narrative. Their closeted world is crumbling around them and the need for stimulation leads to the capture of a zombie, whose seeming indestructibility becomes central to their plight. This then brings us back to the initial point; interpretation. There are many elements to consider; ambiguous characters, the constant drinking, annoying, persistent flies, and potentially damaging secrets with honesty only possible through the recording of video diaries. Like a fragmented stage play, everything plays out in this most restrictive of settings until the pressure inevitably needs a release. Reflecting all this perfectly is a soundtrack that feels like a constant buzzing, as if the flies themselves have settled in your ears, and which further enhances the unsettling atmosphere.

What's Left of Us is not a perfect film, but it contains many of the hallmarks of being one. Just as many viewers will dislike Behl's vision as engage with it, although the film's impact is undeniable. What Behl has done is produce a debut feature that doesn't set out to please everyone, and one that refuses to offer answers to the questions it raises. Ultimately that's down to the viewer. All the pieces are present; how you put them together is up to you.

JOHN TOWNSEND

8

AUTÓMATA

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: GABE IBÁÑEZ / SCREEENPLAY: GABE IBÁÑEZ, IGOR LEGARETTA, JAVIER SÁNCHEZ DONATE / STARRING: ANTONIO BANDERAS, BIRGITTE HJORT SØRENSEN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It's 2044 and solar flare activity has scorched the Earth and toasted over 99% of the world's population. 21 million human survivors live in gloomy hi-tech cities and clunky robots called Pilgrims have been created to help the last of humanity thrive in an increasingly-hostile environment. In best Asimov style, the robots have two overriding protocols: they must preserve human life and they must not modify themselves. Jaded insurance investigator Jacq Vaucan (Banderas) is intrigued by reports of a robot which appears to be upgrading itself. His investigations into the underworld of the clocksmiths, who illegally tamper with robot protocols, leads him to discover that the Pilgrims may indeed be capable of independent thought and they're no longer happy with their existence as unfeeling mechanical creatures.

By its very nature, Autómata can't help but remind us of too many other similar dystopian science fiction futures and tales of anthropomorphised artificial intelligence. A bit of Blade Runner here, a dash of District 9 there (and, more pointedly, the more recent CHAPPiE), sprinkle a bit of I, Robot and AI and leave to simmer for a hundred minutes. The resulting stew has a familiar flavour which offers up its grim taste of humanity's ultimate fate with powerful economy; there's much promise in the scenes of streets lashed with potentially-deadly rain, outsiders scavenging in the city's debris and the last flickering vestiges of a technology which has nothing much to offer beyond superficial stimulation and nothing at all to promise for the future of Mankind. The central premise of robots striving for humanity is deftly set up but the script doesn't seem to know what to do with it and certainly has nothing new to bring to an idea which is, in many ways, as old as sci-fi itself. To its credit, Autómata is resolutely not an action movie; there's much philosophical posturing with the idea that Mankind is losing its humanity even as the robots strive to find it and the only concession to the popcorn crowd is a brief car chase and a last-reel desert shoot out.

Occasionally heavy-going but undeniably thought-provoking, Autómata doesn't quite have the courage of its convictions nor, in the end, any real idea where it wants to drive its story. There's nothing here we've not seen before but it's done with a pleasing noirish style which its relatively-tiny budget belies and it boasts a welcome return to form for Banderas as the world-weary Vaucan and a strong supporting cast of Brits including McInnerny, Andy Nyman and the late David Ryall.

Resolutely grim and refreshingly low-key, Automata doesn't always hit the spot but it's heartening to see another slice of feature film sci-fi cinema which suggests that the idiots haven't completely taken over the fantasy factory.

Extras: *Making of / Interview with Antonio Banderas*

PAUL MOUNT

7

THE SLEEPING ROOM

DVD / CERT:15 / DIRECTOR: JOHN SHACKLETON / SCREENPLAY: ALEX CHANDON, ROSS JAMESON, JOHN SHACKLETON / STARRING: JULIE GRAHAM, LEILA MIMMACK, JOSEPH BEATTIE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Well this one describes itself as "a psychological Gothic tale of Victorian revenge" so it got itself off to a good start in our books. However, it's almost entirely set in present day Brighton, so slightly disappointing on that front if you like your scares Victorian. Mind you, it's director John Shackleton's first feature film and was entirely financed by equity crowd-funding so we're going to have to judge it on that basis; sumptuous period settings and crowd-funding don't tend to be natural bedfellows.

Blue (Mimmack) is a Brighton-based call girl who goes on a professional visit to an old building that Bill (Beattie) is trying to restore. But it turns out Bill isn't really feeling up to anything that would normally require the services of a call girl and just wants her company. There's a mutoscope (you know, those mechanical Victorian things with a flipbook inside) with a disturbing little story in it and a secret room with a two-way mirror. Turns out that some rather unpleasant things have gone on here and they're connected to the present day.

Actually, for what it is, The Sleeping Room isn't bad at all. There are some good performances and it works quite nicely within the obvious constraints of the budget. Even the music and cinematography are surprisingly effective. However, there are problems. The idea of an antique "snuff movie" on the mutoscope is brilliant and it really ought to be a scary moment when we get to see it. But actually, it just looks a little bit silly despite the sack-hooded villain (sacks are the industry-standard low-budget indicator of mysterious villainy) being played by the not-so-low-rent Christopher Adamson (who is actually rather good in it). In fact, one of the major problems is that while the movie's premise should mean that it's scary as you like, it just isn't. Not really a scare to be had in the whole thing and it's nowhere near as tense as it would like to believe that it is.

But for all that, it's still engaging and reasonably entertaining. This kind of indie filmmaking is something you have to love and we have no hesitation in recommending this to anyone.

JOHN KNOTT

7

WYRMWOOD: ROAD OF THE DEAD

DVD + BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: KIAH ROACHE-TURNER / SCREENPLAY: KIAH ROACHE-TURNER, TRISTAN ROACHE-TURNER / STARRING: JAY GALLAGHER, BIANCA BRADEY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Following a stream of foreboding shooting stars, life in the Australian outback is turned on its head as everyone wakes up to find their friends and neighbours have turned into screeching flesh-eating zombies. But not all have succumbed. Sensing that a foul stench has filled the air, mechanic Barry tools up and hurls gasmasks onto his wife and daughter before making a break into the bush while his similarly ill-fated sister Brooke fights for survival in a barn filled with the evil dead. As both siblings struggle for survival, the living and the undead do their best to make the end of days as barbaric and bloody as possible.

While the story may sound familiar, director Kiah Roache-Turner adopts the Australian rules approach by sticking his survivors in full apocalyptic body armour and creating as much damage as possible while throwing in some hilariously typical Aussie traits too. Sitting somewhere between Resident Evil and Mad Max, Wyrmwood (named after the falling star that heralds the rapture) punches the accelerator hard and doesn't hit the break until the final credits roll, running over a hoard of exhaust-spewing zombies along the way.

And therein lies the most ingenious part of Roache-Turner's zombie apocalypse: not only did the falling stars turn the living into the dead (unless you happen to have a rare blood type), but it also rendered all combustible liquids useless while at the same time turning the zombie's blood into burnable fuel. You can see where that is going.

Wyrmwood may be lacking in certain areas, but the ballsy direction coupled with Aussie humour, zombie engines and copious amounts of blood and gore means this is well on its way to being the best Australasian horror film to appear since Peter Jackson's Braindead.

Perhaps the most commendable aspect of Wyrmwood is that it exists largely as a result of a crowdfunding campaign, taking around three to four years to make as the crew (who worked for nothing more than the passion of filmmaking) shot as and when they could. This prolonged period is documented in the 47-minute Wyrmwood Diaries that assembles fast-paced clips of the entire production process from initial set-up for the crowdfunding to the shoot and beyond, all of which is delivered with the same irreverent humour that burns through the veins of the film.

The original 7-minute teaser scene is also included along with two further crowdfunding videos, which laid out the filmmakers' (brothers Kiah and Tristan Roache-Turner) plans for the film that they wanted to make along with a thank you video to the funders (with the siblings in full zombie make-up) asking for help with post production.

Finally storyboards accompanied by crazy '70s funk music can be found, along with 10 deleted scenes totaling nearly 10 minutes plus the pre-requisite Director's Commentary which is definitely worth a listen given the nature of the production.

Extras: *See above*

GRANT KEMPSTER

8

THE RELIC (1997)

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: PETER HYAMS / SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: PENELOPE ANN MILLER, TOM SIZEMORE, LINDA HUNT, JAMES WHITMORE / RELEASE DATE: MAY 25TH

What happened to the dumb but fun monster movies? They seemed to be everywhere for years, and then, after a heyday of sorts in the 1990s, they seemed to die out in favour of the more po-faced, Nolan-esque approach to movies. The mid-late '90s was full of them (most of which have found infamy by being the subject of a bunch of episodes of the How Did This Get Made podcast) and one of the standouts from the period was 1997's The Relic.

Adapted from the book of the same name by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child, the basic plot of the film sees a Chicago cop team up with an anthropologist to take on the lizard god monster that is killing people in the museum she works at (we all remember school trips to museums being like that). With that out of the way, the film is set up for a series of monster attacks, deaths and misleading jumps (they're all here; the cat jumping out of the dark, the killer hobo in the basement, the wheezy cleaning lady).

Despite all of the clichés and plot holes (at one point the creature seems to be attacking various groups of people in different parts of the museum at pretty much the same time), the film moves along at a brisk enough pace for you to not have time to think about them until after the credits have rolled. Part of this is down to the solid - but not spectacular - direction of Peter Hyams, part is down to some great lines in the script and the rest is down to the cast.

Both Penelope Ann Miller and Tom Sizemore are great in the leads, making the most of what are essentially walking stereotype characters (the spunky female scientist and haggard, gruff detective with an ex-wife and a custody battle) and giving them both a charm and wit that keeps you invested in them throughout.

Overall, The Relic is a flawed film that will divide people (with fans of the book taking a dislike to it in particular). But if you're looking for a dumb slice of '90s creature feature fun, you could do a lot worse than this, a film that is both dumb and fun in equal measure!

Sadly, the bonus features on the disc seem to have been carried over from the '90s as well with just a trailer for the film as your lone extra (although in the '90s they would have declared 'Scene Selection' and the menu a bonus feature as well). What's worse, it's not even a good trailer! As such, the film is an 8 out of 10, but the extras deserve a pitiful 0.

Extras: *See above*

STUART MULRAIN

5

WHEN ANIMALS DREAM

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: JONAS ALEXANDER ARNBY / SCREENPLAY: RASMUS BIRCH / STARRING: SONIA SUHL, LARS MIKKELSEN, SONJA RICHTER / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 1ST

What is it with women and werewolves? Filmmakers are obsessed with the idea that because ladies spill some blood each month (and maybe get a little tetchy), they must be howling at the moon while they do it. Since when did bloodletting equal bloodlust? After all, we all go a little hairy sometimes.

When Animals Dream offers another in a long line of teen girls who is struggling to cope with the fact that she has hair sprouting from her chest and is prone to suddenly fly into a dangerous rage. Marie lives with her parents in a remote fishing village on the coast of Denmark. Her father is protective and secretive and her mother is heavily sedated and wheelchair-bound. When Marie starts work at the local fish factory, the boys seem to have their eyes on her, but it is unclear whether it is out of lust or suspicion. After seeing her doctor about a skin rash, she begins sprouting thick hair on her chest as a transformation slowly begins.

Set in a gloomy, isolated coastal community where very few women even seem to exist, When Animals Dream makes its heroine's discomfort with her surroundings clear from the start. The men appear like predators, a close knit community that prey on easy target Marie, humiliating and attacking her. However, as she discovers a lust for boys, namely local stud Daniel, it triggers the beast to be unleashed within her. Probed by the local doctor, hidden away by her father and eyed-up by fish factory men, Marie's transformation cannot be repressed and her declaration '*I'm transforming into a monster*' is part chat up line, part empowering admission.

When Animals Dream deals with the shame that young women might feel over their primal urges after puberty. Like Ginger Snaps before it, Marie learns to accept her newfound lust and embrace it, even if the rest of society wants to control and contain it. The problem is, this has all been said before and better.

Despite decent central performances, particularly from Lars Mikkelsen as the worried father and Sonia Suhl in her debut as the monstrous Marie, When Animals Dream fails to transform effectively from chilly drama to full-blooded werewolf movie. It's certainly not a howler, but with a lack of real originality, it's hard to sink your teeth into.

PETE TURNER

5

SPRING

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: JUSTIN BENSON, AARON MOORHEAD / SCREENPLAY: JUSTIN BENSON / STARRING: LOU TAYLOR PUCCI, NADIA HILKER, VANESSA BEDNAR / RELEASE DATE: MAY 25TH

Evan (Pucci) is in turmoil. His life seems to be falling apart following the death of his mother, so he takes the advice of his friends and takes himself off to Italy. After a few boozy days with some fellow travellers, he meets a beautiful young girl, Louise (Hilker), who entrances him. Not put off by her off-the-cuff and hard-to-get manner, he decides to stick around after his drinking buddies move on. Taking a bed-and-work job on an olive farm (the wizened Francesco Carnelutti adding to the Mediterranean flavour), he begins seeing Louise, but despite seemingly getting along, remains strangely at arm's length emotionally.

Things are not quite what they seem with Louise, as we find out she's harbouring a secret. One which requires regular injections otherwise things get terribly ugly.

Although there's a very real palpable sense of dread built, it would be a mistake to call Spring a horror film. The first act is mainly well-acted drama, then it moves gradually to mysterious romance, before the revelation, and then there's almost a presiding feel of a mythical history lesson. Under the dual direction of Moorhead and Benson (from the latter's script), the different tones blend beautifully together. The former's sumptuous cinematography makes the most of the glorious locations, with some stunning shots and fluid camera movements through the moody Italian street.

The leads manage admirably with the dense, often complex material, and have a genuine chemistry together, which makes their emotional plight even more captivating. An appearance early on from The Battery's Jeremy Gardner provides a light edge, but for the most part it's a cerebral journey through a relationship that where commitment could come at too high a price.

It's perhaps only when it comes to the somewhat suspect CGI that the film shows any flaws. Had it stuck to practical effects, it may well have got away with it. Thankfully, these digital flourishes are used sparingly and for the most part it's icky, sticky and very gnarly.

It's a film that requires a little patience and no preconceptions. Go in with an open mind, expecting nothing, and it will reward you with a wonderfully offbeat romantic drama, with just the right amount of elements to keep it with the 'genre'. There's an ethereal quality which is engrossing, rich in atmosphere and rather splendid. At times, it feels as though it could be heading into Cat People territory, but instead, the truth about Louise conjures a more intense ethical and personal dilemma. At its core, Spring is essentially about the choices we make for love. With added tentacles.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

8

BLOOD AND BLACK LACE (1964)

BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: MARIO BAVA / SCREENPLAY: MARCELLO FONDATO / STARRING: CAMERON MITCHELL, EVA BARTOK, THOMAS REINER, ARIANA GORINI / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Pssst... Fancy a bit of giallo? Course you do. What was that? Oh, right... Well a giallo is one of those stylish Italian thrillers that started in the '60s and have proved highly influential on the modern slasher-flick. OK, let us put it another way. Fancy seeing a film about a fashion house full of impossibly glamorous Italian models being picked off one-by-one by a masked killer in retina-burning Technicolor? Oh, now you're interested...

Blood and Black Lace is an early (though not the first) giallo and it's brought to you by the masterful Mario Bava. It's set around the aforementioned fashion house and while the story has some admirable twists, it's still fairly perfunctory stuff. But who watches a giallo for the plot? OK, some might, but this is a movie whose original poster boasted "Guaranteed! The 8 greatest shocks ever filmed!" We actually gave up counting on that front [*Did you even start?* – Ed] but as nothing burst out of anyone's chest and a half-buried Statue of Liberty does not make a late appearance to reveal where they really are, we think it fair to say that might be a slight exaggeration. Mind you, it's still pretty brutal and it'd be fair to say that it was probably fairly shocking at the time. The suspense is brilliantly handled and the killings are surprisingly wince-inducing for the mid-'60s.

But arguably the real strength of the movie is just the look of the damn thing. While some of Bava's shot composition is extraordinary, the use of colour is nothing short of astonishing. Right from the restored original (and brilliantly camp) opening credits, Bava unleashes an assault on our visual senses. You're left wondering why all movies don't look like this until you realise we'd all have some terrible movie-induced headache if they did. If you want to get all film studies about it we can assure you that the colours all have some meaning to convey (never wear the same black dress the recently murdered model was supposed to wear) but to be honest, it's just the sheer brilliance of those reds and greens that captivate. And there we were thinking monochrome was the only way to do moody [*that's just you* – Ed]. We don't normally bang on about the quality of the Blu-ray transfer too much but this is a new 2K restoration from the original negative and we very much doubt it has been seen like this since its original theatrical release. It has to be seen to be believed.

So it's a visually stunning ground-breaking thriller that's been brilliantly restored and presented in the most flattering of ways. What do you people want? Eva Bartok?

Oh, and it has Eva Bartok in it. Of course it does.

Extras: *Five documentaries / commentary by Tim Lucas / alternate credit sequence / trailer / short film / booklet / subtitle or English soundtrack options.*

JOHN KNOTT

9

INTERVIEW - CHRISTOPH BEHL

CHRISTOPH BEHL is a German-born writer and director who studied his trade in Argentina and Spain. Primarily a documentary filmmaker, Behl's first feature, WHAT'S LEFT OF US, follows three friends in the wake of a zombie apocalypse...

STARBURST: This is a hugely ambiguous film that can be interpreted in many ways. Would you say this is your version of hell?
Christoph Behl: It is a good question, because I like the fact that people will have a dialogue with the film when they try and interpret it. There are references to Sartre and there are very different ideas of why it is like it is.

Love appears to be one of your central themes, but the characters become almost asexual as the dynamic changes.
[Laughs] We originally filmed some sex scenes but we didn't put them in the film! With them, the love was much stronger but it wasn't part of the original plan. With the scenes in, it felt like there was too much energy somehow.

Decay is also a strong theme, but there seem to be contrasts in how this is presented.
It's very much there. Perhaps it's the human characters decaying more slowly than the zombies, with the flies and so on. I don't have all the answers, I'm afraid.

Talking of flies, there are a lot in the film. How difficult was that for the cast and crew to work with?
It was really hard at first because we used lots of real flies and they were everywhere! It made it uncomfortable for everyone, but they're not dangerous. After a few days, everyone just got used to it.

The film felt like a play in many ways, with just the three main characters and the mainly fixed location.
It wasn't such a dogmatic decision to use one place, but as we rewrote the script it just became that way. For me, it was important to reduce many of the elements and work more on the characters when there are less distractions.

The three leads deliver outstanding performances. Was it difficult to cast the roles given the chemistry you needed?
It was difficult, as you need a good cast or you don't have a good film. Without them, the script just doesn't matter. I watched them all in plays to see what they were doing, but it took six or seven months to sort out. They were very involved too, as they changed a lot of the script and we decided not to just have shots; we filmed the scenes and let them run, which I guess is documentary in style, but we did it just to see what would happen.

You have a documentary background and this film feels very voyeuristic. Was this something you planned?
The idea was to get the voyeuristic feeling by not making the cast act for the camera and just to watch them. It was important to simply observe them, like the Dardenne Brothers, although they are much better at it than me. We also didn't change the lens similar to them. We kept the same optic the whole time to make it feel very close. If you see this film in the cinema, you are always so close up with the faces.

The sound in the film is hard to really describe, how did you envisage it?
We had this idea from the beginning where we wondered what we could do differently. Everyone has seen zombie movies, there are so many, so we didn't need the backstory. What we did was put the sound from the outside into the inside of the house so it plays through the speakers on to the characters all of the time. That was the main idea, to make the environment even more unbearable. It was brave to make a film without music but I thought we did a good job.

There are so many zombie films out there and this feels like a direct opposite to *World War Z*. Were you nervous at all about entering the genre?
No, I liked the idea of going into the genre. I think it's good to work with popular mythology. There are rules that are accepted and it's good to work within them. The interesting thing is to work inside these conventions to tell a normal story. There are a lot of films like this now, such as Jim Jarmusch's vampire film *Only Lovers Left Alive*.

JOHN TOWNSEND

WHAT'S LEFT OF US is out now on DVD, and is reviewed on page 86.

SAMUEL FULLER'S

FORTY GUNS

Described by Martin Scorsese as "pure emotion", *Forty Guns* is one of the most dynamic cult Westerns of the fifties.
Available for the first time on Blu-ray in a Dual Format edition this June.

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OST

THE STARBURST GUIDE TO THE LATEST SOUNDTRACKS BY NICK SPACEK

Hollywood Records and Marvel Music released the Brian Tyler and Danny Elfman score for **Avengers: Age of Ultron** digitally last month, and should almost be out on compact disc by the time you're holding this issue in your hands. The score features two pieces of music by Elfman not used in the film, *Heroes* and *Inevitability-One Good Eye*. *Heroes* is very complimentary to Tyler's portion of the score, and it seems odd they'd not use it in the film, as it's not so stereotypically "Elfman" as the other pieces he did, such as *It Begins* and the restructured **Avengers** theme which plays over the closing credits.

Now that we're into the third season, music from the BBC America original series **Orphan Black** is finally getting an official release with not one, but two albums on Varèse Sarabande. Sadly, they're not Season One and Season Two scores, but instead, a compilation score and a soundtrack compiling music featured in the series. The score has selections from Trevor Yuile's original score, and the soundtrack has songs from Young Empires, The Ettes, Matthew Dear, Humans, Tears for Fears, Elliott Brood, Foxygen, Meredith Brooks & more, as well as the series' theme by Two Fingers. No *Water Prayer Rasta Mix* by Adham Shaikh, sadly, so recreating that clone dance party in your living room won't be happening anytime soon. The soundtrack will be released on May 19th and is now available for pre-order on Amazon.

The label is also putting out what might be the most ridiculous compilation we've ever seen. It's a six-disc CD set featuring (deep breath): **Back In Time: 1985 At The Movies** with David Newman conducting the debut of the Varèse Sarabande Symphony Orchestra, performing classic themes from movies released that year. It includes a diverse range, from **The Color Purple** to **Rambo: First Blood Part II**.

There's also **1985 At The Movies: The Songs**, which has original songs from movies of that year, like *Weird Science* by Oingo Boingo, from the film of the same name. There's a **Back to the Future** trilogy disc, along with **Out of Africa** and **The Goonies** on separate discs, as well. What might be most appealing is a disc buried right in the middle: **1985 at Varèse Sarabande**, which has Danny Elfman's complete score for **Pee-Wee's Big Adventure**, along with cuts from **Spies Like Us**, **Jagged Edge**, and more – including the newly-remastered Elmer Bernstein score for Disney's **The Black Cauldron**, which has me weeping with need, because at the moment, the only way to get it is as part of a ticket package for a concert in Los Angeles. The label did announce that, due to massive demand, **Back In Time** "will be available by itself at a later date," but no official release has been announced.

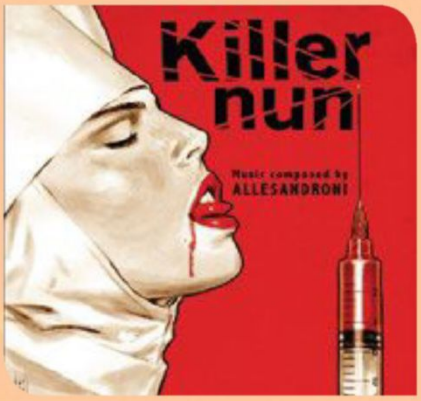
That concert is the début outing for Varèse Live Entertainment, a "film music concerts company dedicated to producing and promoting the highest quality film music concerts around the world." It seems they're likely to produce concerts such as this 1985-themed show, as well as other themed concept performances and even possibly orchestras playing live scores to films. We're very intrigued.

Interestingly enough, mere days after Varèse made their announcement, MovieScore Media made one of a similar nature. Their venture will be called **Soundtracks Live!**, but rather than putting on shows, MovieScore "offers a large catalogue of 'ready-to-go' concert programs featuring music from film, television and games." Essentially a way for orchestras to acquire film music for their repertoires, it seems like a very intriguing way for performances to branch out from the usual **Star Wars** themes.

The **Ash vs. The Evil Dead** series for Starz will feature a score by long-time Sam Raimi collaborator Joseph LoDuca. LoDuca did the score for both **Evil Dead** films, **Army of Darkness**, **Hercules: The Legendary Journeys**, **Xena: Warrior Princess**, and **American Gothic**, and has most recently been the composer for Starz's wildly popular **Spartacus** series.

For their launch, new Australian label Xozmiq released a trio of Brian May scores for Record Store Day. Limited to 500 copies each, the scores for **Patrick**, **Thirst**, and **The Day After Halloween** are now out in the world. They look and sound great, having been fully remastered and pressed onto some gorgeous vinyl, but aside from new art assembled from vintage elements by Luke Fraser – who also did Dual Planet's release of May's **Turkey Shoot** score – there's not much in terms of extras. No liner notes, director commentary, or anything means they're fairly bare-bones, but the sound quality is well worth the coin you'll drop.

Other Record Store Day releases which can be found more easily include the very-excellent Light in the Attic LP for **Shogun Assassin**. The Wonderland Philharmonic,



which performs this excellently funky synth score, is a duo of W. Michael Lewis and Mark Lindsay, and if you've ever grooved hard to the GZA's *Liquid Swords*, much of the music will be familiar to you. For those who just love synth, funk, or a solid samurai movie, this score might be the hidden gem you've never had.

Death Waltz Recording Company and Mondo released the Steve Moore score for Adam Windgard and Simon Barrett's 2014 horror thriller **The Guest**. As anyone who's seen the film can attest, the score dovetails nicely with the late '80s Goth-rock soundtrack featuring Love and Rockets, Front 242, and Sisters of Mercy. We're of the opinion that while the music was excellent, as was the film, the two didn't really mesh well together at all. It'll be interesting to see how the music works when divorced from the movie itself. The score comes on red vinyl, and features three bonus tracks, including one unused piece of chase music, and it had already sold out three days after it released.

Moore's seen a lot of material released lately, having also released **The Zombi Anthology**, the first recordings from his long-running instrumental progressive rock duo with A.E. Paterra, on Relapse Records last month.

Death Waltz also released **Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers**' score, as done by Michael Perilstein, along with the score to **Killer Nun** by Alessandro Alessandroni. It's a cavalcade of cult movie strangeness and certainly runs the gamut of styles: synthy '80s worship from Moore, legitimately dirty '80s synth from Perilstein, and lush Italian strings from Alessandroni. This marks the first time on vinyl for both **Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers** and **Killer Nun**, although both have come out on compact disc in the past.

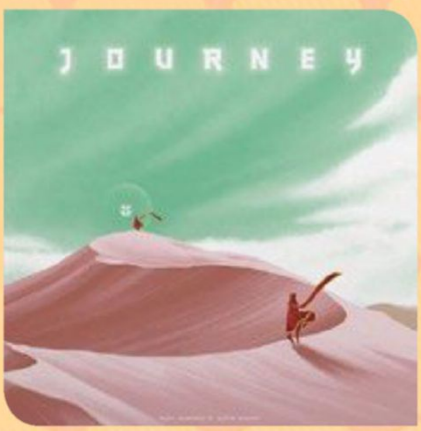
To top all that off, Mondo is reissuing Fred Myron and Malcom Seagrave's score to **Phantasm**. It's been unavailable on LP for 35 years, and the Austin, Texas label is reissuing it on 180-gram vinyl, with liner notes contributed by director Don Coscarelli. It was made available at a screening in Dallas, as well as part of the Texas Frightmare Weekend, and will be available online soon.

Blake Neely continues to be the DC Universe's go-to composer for their television work. In addition to **Arrow** and **The Flash**, Neely just completed work last month for DC's upcoming **Supergirl** series on CBS.

It seems like there's been a lot of synchronicity in terms of home video and soundtrack releases as of late, and there's a few more on the way. **Don't Go in the Woods** saw release via Vinegar Syndrome a couple months back, and if you wondered why a $20,000 '80s slasher needed a Blu-ray release, then the tinny keyboard score by H. Kingsley Thurber from Motionsound is likely not up your alley, either. I will be grabbing one as soon as possible, though.

1970's **Mark of the Devil** came out as an excellent Blu-ray from Arrow Films back in March, as well, and now One Way Static will be putting out Michael Holm's lushly gorgeous score to the dark and uncomfortable witch-hunting movie. It's been available on compact disc once before, but this seems to be the first time it's been available on LP.

All-rounders iam8bit announced the vinyl release of Austin Wintory's Grammy-nominated soundtrack to the PlayStation 3 game **Journey**, available for the first time on vinyl. The soundtrack was performed with a live orchestra for the game, making this something rather more expansive than your standard video game score. Mark Englert provides the album art, which extends to the inside of the release and the records themselves, as this is a double-LP picture disc set, with the artwork on the LPs featuring the game's protagonist, the Traveler. The album is available for pre-order now, and ships in August.



And we even have a second video game score release for you this month. Jason Graves' score for the new PlayStation game, **1886: The Order**, is finally getting a full-on physical release. It's been available digitally from iTunes and the like since February, as well as a manufacture-on-demand compact disc from Sony Classic, but Music On Vinyl imprint At the Movies has put out a 180-gram LP of Graves' music, with the first 500 copies on gold marbled vinyl. It's rollicking, with lots of brass and forward momentum, sure to thrill fans of the game.

When Private Records put out their version of Roberto Donati's **Mangiati Vivi! (Eaten Alive!)** score last year, it sold out in record time. Demand's remained high, so the label will repress it again soon. All we know is that it will be a "small second edition," but keep an eye out.

Finally, we always love to bring you reading recommendations, but books on score and soundtracks are few and far between. That makes this month's newest 33 ⅓ Books instalment on Koji Kondo's **Super Mario Bros.** soundtrack by Andrew Schartmann all the more exciting. This might be the first history of video game music I've seen. There are plenty books on theory and composition for the genre, but stories of how something came to be just don't exist.

We got a chance to flip through a copy right before deadline, and Schartmann's introduction makes enough amazing points that we can recommend it based solely on those three pages. In it, the author says Kondo's work "*put to rest an era of bleeps and bloops... replacing it with one in which game sounds constituted a legitimate form of artistic expression.*" Beautiful, right? Given that tease, and 33 ⅓ 's reputation for quality publications, this is definitely one to get your hands on.

BRAVE NEW WORDS

ED FORTUNE BRINGS YOU THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF GENRE LITERATURE

THE LITTLE PRINCE to Sell For £150000

A unique presentation copy of **The Little Prince** has been offered for sale by Peter Harrington, the largest seller of rare books in the UK. The first edition is in English with double inscriptions in French and an original half-page drawing of the Little Prince by the author, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. The book was originally owned by Dorothy Barclay, a friend of the author who helped with the research. It contains some special commentary on the thoughts of the Little Prince, written by the author. The movie adaptation of **The Little Prince** will be out this year.

Sasquan Gears Up For Most Controversial Hugo Awards Ever

As mentioned last issue, there has been some controversy over the 2015 Hugo Awards, which will be presented at Sasquan, the 73rd World Science Fiction Convention (AKA Worldcon). Block voting by special interest groups has led to outrage amongst the fandom, and the general feeling is that many of the nominations have been motivated by politics rather than the works themselves. Multiple nominees have voluntarily dropped out, including Marko Kloos, Annie Bellet and Edmund R. Schubert. With an online campaign to vote for No Award gaining online support, it's likely that this controversial award ceremony may also be quite boring.

Worldcon Site Selection Is Open

Speaking of the Hugos, the organisers of Sasquan have announced that site selection for the 2017 Worldcon is now open. To have a say in where the 2017 Worldcon event is, you have to be at least a supporting member of the Sasquan event and pay a site selection fee. There are four possible sites; Nippon, Montreal, Washington DC and Helsinki. We wish them all luck, and if you're interested in getting involved, full details on how you can do so can be found on the **Helsinki In 2017** website.

Green Party Start Copyright Debate

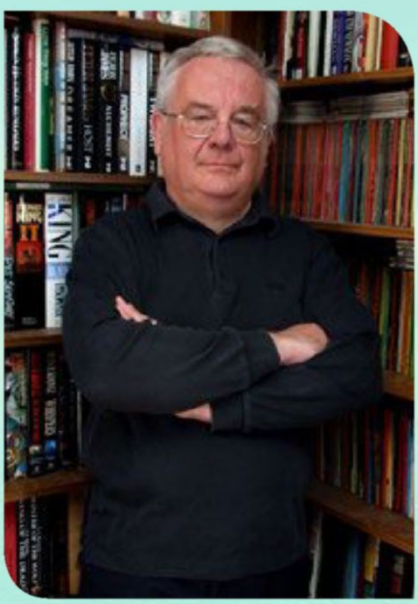
Thanks to a poorly worded manifesto promise during the run-up to the (now thankfully over) UK Parliamentary Elections, the notion of how copyright affects professional writers has now become part of the ongoing argument which is the national debate. A promise by the Greens that a creator's copyright would only last 14 years caused quite a stir amongst media professionals, with many stating that it would damage the industry greatly. Though the Greens later said they intended it to be lifetime + 14 years, they are now re-examining the policy. The debate is likely to rage on for some time to come.

European Science Fiction Society 2015 Winners Announced

The European Science Fiction Society is an international organisation of SF professionals and fans committed to promoting science fiction. They announced the winners of their annual awards at the 37th Eurocon which took place in St. Petersburg this April. The winners were: China Miéville for Best Author, Manchu for Best Artist, **Fantastica Almanac** for Best Magazine, Gollancz for Best Publisher and Mihaela Marija Perković for Best Promoter. In a scoop for the Russians, Ekaterina Dobrohotova-Majkova won best translator.

Ramsey Campbell Honoured By John Moores University

Liverpool born sci-fi writer Ramsey Campbell has received an Honorary Fellowship at John Moores University (Liverpool, England) for his outstanding contribution to literature. Campbell is a writer, editor and critic who has been a creative force for over 50 years, and has been described as a member of 'The Scouserati'; a list of influential Scousers with global appeal.



STARBURST's own book podcast, **THE BOOKWORM**, is filled with all the latest news, reviews and interviews and can be found on Twitter **@radiobookworm**

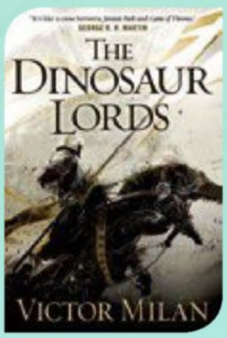
ED FORTUNE HIGHLIGHTS NOTEWORTHY NEW TITLES

COMING SOON

ARMADA

AUTHOR: ERNEST CLINE
PUBLISHER: CENTURY
RELEASE DATE: JULY 16TH

With **Ready Player One** about to be turned into a big budget Hollywood movie, Ernest Cline is very much on the rise at the moment. **Armada** promises to be more YA-inspired, nostalgia-fuelled fun. The plot follows the misadventures of Zack Lightman, a school kid who is called upon to save the earth from an alien invasion. Problem is, Zack can't help but notice that these UFOs seem awfully familiar. Not only do these ships look like they've come straight from a very popular video game, it seems that only he and fellow gamers can save mankind. And that just seems too much like a movie to an increasingly suspicious Zack.



THE DINOSAUR LORDS

AUTHOR: VICTOR MILÀN
PUBLISHER: TOR
RELEASE DATE: JULY 28TH

Described as **Jurassic Park** meets **A Game of Thrones**, Victor Milàn's **The Dinosaur Lords** is certainly an intriguing idea. Set in a world similar to our 14th Century, but with dinosaurs and dragons roaming the Earth, it sounds like a gritty fantasy reboot of **The Flintstones** to us. Victor Milàn has a solid track record of delivering interesting ideas in a fast-paced and intelligent way, though he's probably better known for his work on Harlequin's **Rogue Angel** series.

HALF A WAR (SHATTERED SEA)

AUTHOR: JOE ABERCROMBIE
PUBLISHER: DEL REY
RELEASE DATE: JULY 16TH

The devilishly charming Joe Abercrombie completes his **Shattered Sea** series with **Half a War**. The previous two books have been a triumph of gritty realism and exotic fantasy ideas, and it looks like we will get all that and more. We expect to see Father Yarvi's carefully laid plans and machinations finally reach a conclusion as war between the High King and those who oppose him rocks the Shattered Sea. Abercrombie still has plenty of tricks up his sleeve, and we are looking forward to seeing yet another triumph of subtlety and violence.

STAR WARS: DARK DISCIPLE

AUTHOR: CHRISTIE GOLDEN
PUBLISHER: LUCAS BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: JULY 7TH

Based on unproduced episodes of **The Clone Wars** TV series, **Dark Disciple** focuses on everybody's favourite pale-skinned wannabe Sith, Asajj Ventress. Exiled from the Sith, Asajj teams up with brash Jedi Knight Quinlan Vos in order to hunt down and thwart the leader of the Separatists, Count Dooku. Can the light side and the dark side work together? Or will there be sudden and inevitable betrayal? Regardless, this promises to be a rare treat and a much needed fix for **Clone Wars** fans.

MIDIAN UNMADE: TALES OF CLIVE BARKER'S NIGHTBREED

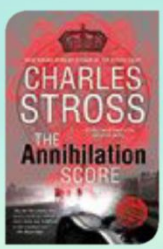
AUTHORS: JOSEPH NASSISE, DEL HOWISON (EDITORS), CLIVE BARKER AND MORE
PUBLISHER: TOR
RELEASE DATE: JULY 28TH

Clive Barker's Midian has captured many people's imagination over the years. Be it the gloriously messy **Nightbreed**, the slightly more focused novella **Cabal** or even through the various graphic novels, Baphomet's children have gotten around a bit. **Midian Unmade** is a huge short story collection, filled with tales of the Midian monsters. Featuring the likes of Karl Alexander, Amber Benson, Nancy Holder, Seanan McGuire, David J. Schow and Stephen Woodworth, it's sure to be a treat for anyone who hasn't quite let go of their inner Goth.

THE FALL

AUTHOR: R. J. PINEIRO
PUBLISHER: THOMAS DUNNE BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: JULY 28TH

The Fall is a sci-fi thriller about a thrill-seeker who jumps from the upper-most reaches of the atmosphere and vanishes. He ends up on an alternate Earth where he died five years earlier. It's also a universe where his wife still loves him, his boss absolutely hates him and the government is after him to find out exactly what has happened. Expect action hero-style, high octane adventure with a smattering of conspiracy theory and romance.



THE ANNIHILATION SCORE (LAUNDRY FILES NOVEL)

AUTHOR: CHARLES STROSS
PUBLISHER: ORBIT
RELEASE DATE: JULY 2ND

The Annihilation Score is the latest instalment of Charles Stross' incredibly popular supernatural spy thriller series, **The Laundry**. There's a change of format this time round; it concentrates on Mo, rather than Bob. Seems things are about to get sticky for the UK's very special service. Looks like normal members of the public are developing magical abilities, making it difficult for those who like to cover up such things. Worse still, a mysterious figure is pulling off daring heists across Britain, and it's up to Mo to get to the bottom of it all.

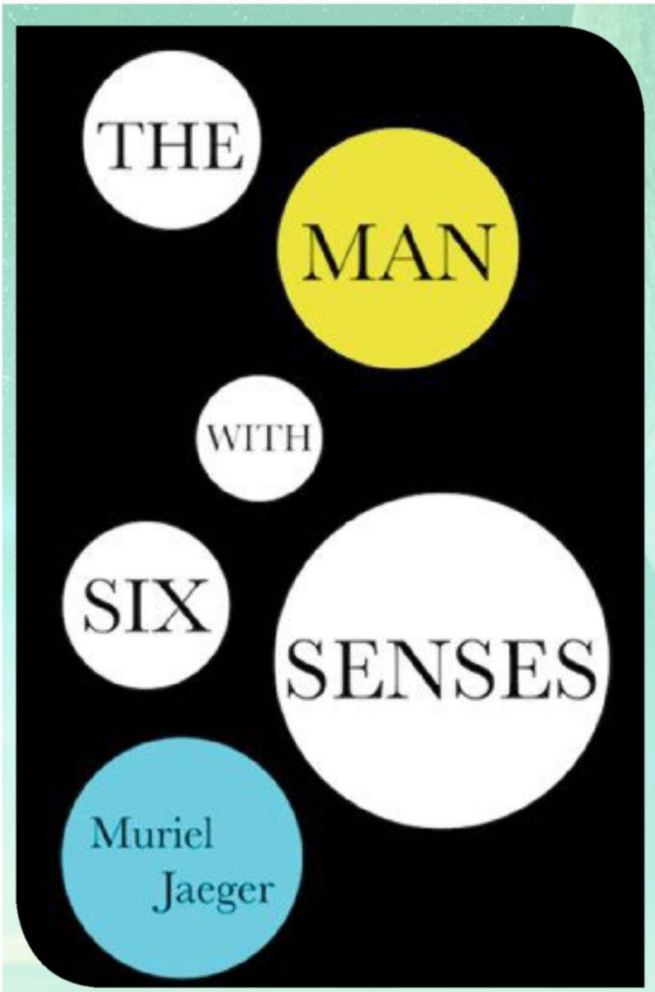
BATMAN ARKHAM KNIGHT: THE OFFICIAL NOVELIZATION

AUTHOR: MARV WOLFMAN
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS LTD
RELEASE DATE: JULY 21ST

Marv Wolfman is one of the big names in comic books; his work on **Teen Titans** and **Batman** is seen as quintessential reading by those in the know, so this prose version of the popular game may well be very good. This novelisation of the **Arkham Knight** game follows on from previous events: Gotham City is in chaos as crime runs wild, seeking to fill the void left by the alleged death of the Joker. When Scarecrow attempts to unleash a toxin that will kill the population of Gotham, the result is uncontrollable panic and utter anarchy, and only one man is up to the task of saving the city.

BOOK WORMHOLE

A MONTHLY PICK OF GENRE FICTION BY KATE FATHERS



Stories about people with special abilities are as old as human thought. From demigods and supermen to the X-MEN and the FANTASTIC FOUR, we love exploring our capacity to adapt and our fear of failing. But as our world has changed so have our heroes, and sometimes we've found that they're not really heroes at all. And there's no better example of that than THE MAN WITH SIX SENSES...

For most of his life, Ralph Standring expected to marry Hilda. It's what his mother wanted and what he hoped for, after university and the Great War and time for them both to grow. But when he finally gets around to popping the question, Ralph discovers that Hilda has met someone else: Michael Bristowe, a man with an uncommon gift. Michael can sense objects. He can feel copper in the earth and iron ore in the hills; he knows what's hidden behind every hedge and what snowflakes feel like, curling towards the ground. Hilda believes his gift could save humanity, but Ralph can't seem to believe it. All he sees is a man being slowly destroyed.

By all rights *The Man with Six Senses*, first published in 1927 by Leonard and Virginia Woolf, should be all about Hilda. It's her who discovers Michael and forges a relationship with him. It's her that supports him and believes in him and, eventually, makes a great sacrifice in his name. It's her that truly knows him, like we readers never do. But Muriel Jaeger bucks our expectation, choosing to tell Hilda and Michael's story from Ralph's perspective instead. It's a fascinating decision, particularly as Ralph isn't the kindest or the most compassionate narrator. He's self-serving, he's sexist, he's classist, and once he even sinks so low as to wish that a sick Michael would die so that he could have Hilda all to himself. He is the *worst* person to narrate this story, and yet somehow it works. Ralph is the scepticism and distance that we wouldn't get if the book focused more closely on Hilda and Michael; he brings the outside attitudes that we might have otherwise been shielded from. He strips the romance out of the relationship, revealing how dangerous, isolating and shaky it is underneath, and while you could argue that he might be wrong - that he doesn't really know them and that his prejudices blind him - how fantastic is it that *this* is how we see our main characters? That *this* is how we're supposed to feel about them? This is not the heady closeness of Bella and Edward. This is something new.

While its narration is one cornerstone of *The Man with Six Senses*, another is the setting. This is very much a post-WWI book, not only because it's set in the 1920s, making Hilda and Michael (and to a lesser extent, Ralph) part of the Lost Generation, but because even though the War is years past it is still incredibly pervasive. It's in Hilda's post-War belief that there is something broken in humanity and in her hope in Michael to fix it; it's in Ralph's cynical view of the supernatural and his desire to get on with the life he had before combat; and it's in Michael's sensitive psyche that so mirrors the trauma many soldiers were left with. Michael may not have fought in the War, but I firmly believe that Jaeger wrote him as a metaphor for the shell-shocked soldier. There is an incredibly astute representation of mental illness in Michael, which not only draws attention to the terrible treatment of veterans but serves to make Michael's gift even more tragic. His abilities don't make him a success or a superhero, no matter how much Hilda might want him to be. Instead they eat away at him, devouring his energy and his personality and everything that made him a man, rather than a mutant. Without the backdrop of a post-WWI world, Michael's misfortune wouldn't be as acute, nor would Hilda's actions be as desperate. These characters are stretched thin, by their choices, their planet and by all the things they can't control. And in some ways, that's the book's ultimate tragedy.

There is so much going on in *The Man with Six Senses*, and I've only scratched the surface here. Jaeger's book is thoughtful and intriguing, exploring multiple ideas with a careful attention that you don't expect from Jaeger's chosen narrator. Her prose can be both poetic and to-the-point, and layers meaning in every word. It's not the story I expected, but it's one I've grown to love, and I'm saddened that it's fallen off the radar. If you like the little I've told you, then you're going to love the rest of this story.

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SIMON CLARK

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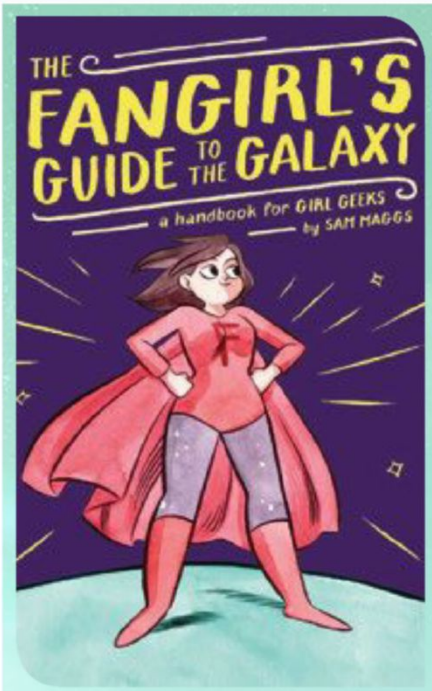

THE FANGIRL'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY: A HANDBOOK FOR GIRL GEEKS

AUTHOR: SAM MAGGS / PUBLISHER: QUIRK BOOKS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Since the turn of the century, the glorious world of geekdom has been ever expanding. Things that used to be a niche retreat for a mostly male and steadily ageing audience have now been embraced by a wider demographic. Greater exposure has brought more diversity and more people. It also means terminology has adapted and changed, with entirely new elements of the geek subculture forming seemingly overnight. Change is good, but also confusing and stressful for all involved.

The Fangirl's Guide to the Galaxy is a book aimed at making life easier for a large chunk of the fandom. It's intended for those making their first few faltering steps into geekdom and quite sensibly feels that some sort of guidebook is required. Squarely aimed at the younger generation, it's written in a relentlessly chirpy style that introduces the quirks and code words of the modern geek.

Sam Maggs' love for all things strange and fannish permeates its way throughout this book; every page feels like a well-written but enthusiastic post on social media. The author takes us through all elements of modern geek life; from how to deal with Internet trolls, how social media can help you, where to start with fanfiction, what to pack when going to a comic-con and so on. It's full of useful advice and it also goes one step further; it explains in clear and simple terms what feminism is, and busts various myths about the social movement as it goes along.

It does suffer from being US-centred; the convention guide only covers North America, though most of the advice is solid regardless of where you are in the world. Some of the references are quite current and it's likely that this book will date quite quickly. A bit more depth to some of the older aspects of the fandom would also have been nice as well. After all, Doctor Who is over 50 years old and Worldcon is even older than that, but this is a guide aimed at beginners, so the lack of depth is more a feature than a flaw. It does have some great interviews as well, and these work as a handy starting point for those looking to get into all sorts of geeky things.

If you're the sort of gentleman who shifts uncomfortably at the phrase 'Geek Feminism' and feelS a little bit out of your depth when faced with a whole new generation of excited female fans start talking about their 'SuperWhoLocks' and the like, then you need to read this book. Carefully and with an open mind. If you have a teenage girl geek in your life (or you're one yourself), then this is an excellent starting point. Highly recommended.

ED FORTUNE

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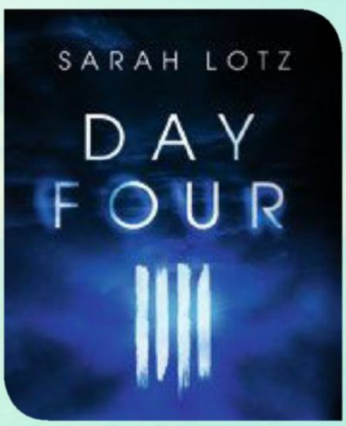

DAY FOUR

AUTHOR: SARAH LOTZ / PUBLISHER: HODDER AND STOUGHTON / RELEASE DATE: MAY 21ST

Day Four is the sequel to Sarah Lotz's previous chiller, The Three, but one that's designed to work entirely on its own, and you could easily get away with reading them in the 'wrong' order. The connections are both obvious and subtle, and they both share the theme of claustrophobic transport; The Three is a tense drama that revolves around planes, Day Four is set on a cruise ship.

The comparisons stop there, however. The Three is a creep-fest, whereas Day Four is a slow-burn thriller. Day Four is entirely set on the incredibly tacky cruise ship The Beautiful Dreamer, which has stalled somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico. As you may gather from the title, much of the action takes place on day four of the journey. Lotz introduces us to a variety of strange and interesting characters, each with their own unique perspective and take on life. We meet the PA to a celebrity psychic, a chambermaid, an elderly couple and a man called Gary. Each has their own story to tell and their own secrets to keep.

The plot proceeds at a leisurely pace, rather like a working cruise ship, and the narrative is stitched together from multiple points of view. The story flits from one person to another, building up a steadily disturbing narrative. Lotz taps into the everyday and mundane fears we have here; the revulsions and disruptions that make a normal day unpleasant. Inevitably, things get worse as the tale heads from claustrophobic thriller into spooky thriller.

Each horrible moment is driven by despair and the fear of death, making this a dark yet compulsive experience. It is very much a slow burn of a book; Day Four is, oddly enough, not meant to be read in a day. With a large cast of characters and a series of weird things going on, the meandering pace works best when you slow down and take your time to absorb each nasty thing that's happening.

If you're looking for a nice and spooky holiday book, but don't have room in your bag for a Stephen King style shelf-breaker, then this is the next best thing. Densely packed and built for pleasure, Day Four is a cruise you'll never forget.

ED FORTUNE

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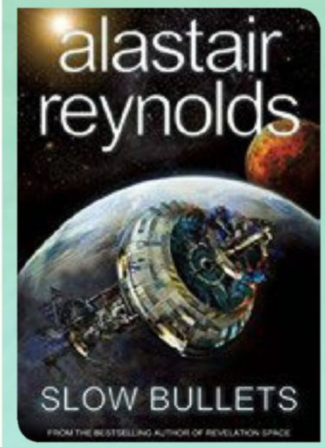

SLOW BULLETS

AUTHOR: ALASTAIR REYNOLDS
PUBLISHER: TACHYON
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 9TH

Running at around 192 pages, Alastair Reynolds' long novella (40,000 words) Slow Bullets is an odd read. Modern readers are used to being spoiled with hundreds of pages of narrative, character development, prose and a sense of bulk. With this story, Reynolds needs to tread a middle ground between the economy of the short story and the enjoyment of rounding out characters and plot over screeds of text.

Fans of Reynolds' Revelation Space stories will recognise much of the world of Slow Bullets; much but not all. The central figure (but not quite hero) is Scur, a soldier from the dying days of a war in our far future whose last act was to be caught and tortured by enemy soldier Orvin. The story shifts without warning to Scur waking up from cryo-sleep on board the spaceship Caprice. Here we have something different – in this world it is possible to travel faster than light, though this is not without its perils.

Over the rest of the story several ideas are joined together, including survival, revenge, system engineering, entropy, alien super races and religious intolerance. Hovering across all of the concepts is the slow bullet of the title – a sophisticated piece of technology that can be injected into a person and set to tunnel its way towards any part of the body at any speed and with as much or as little pain as the programmer desires. All soldiers have these as they act like dog tags recording the whole history and identity of each of them.

Although the story does come together, it does have a tendency to jump between ideas. There is enough imagination in Slow Bullets to have created at least one modern-length book and, even though Slow Bullets is a good read, many will reach the end and wish there had been more.

That being said, any fan of Alastair Reynolds' work should pre-order now.

TONY JONES

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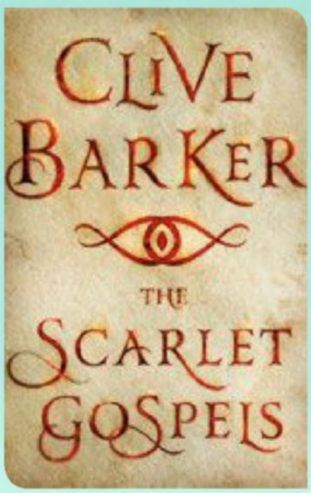

THE SCARLET GOSPELS

AUTHOR: CLIVE BARKER
PUBLISHER: MACMILLAN
RELEASE DATE: MAY 21ST

For many, Clive Barker is a true master of the horror novel, combining gore and whimsy in equal measure. Barker creates fantastical worlds with believable people in them, and then floods those worlds with blood and other bodily fluids. Others argue that Barker's impact has waned over the years, falling prey to overly complex and wordy world building that neither excites nor entices.

The Scarlet Gospels has been keenly anticipated by both sides; long delayed and heavily promoted, it's the book that pits Barker's own occult detective Harry D'Amour against the demonic Cenobites; namely the monster Pinhead. Anyone who watched horror movies during the '80s will be familiar with Pinhead, and the horrible creature is responsible for much of Barker's fame.

The book opens with a version of Harry D'Amour, who is not the heavily tattooed monster killer that we learned to love in Everville, and we gain a horrifying understanding of what drives the man. We also learn more about Pinhead itself and what motivates it. This is not the eloquent wise-cracking creature from the movies, rather it's a thug sent from Hell's heart to punish mankind. The two swiftly meet, as it seems that the Cenobites want Harry to serve as a witness to their might. The first encounter is cleverly done, and the iconic puzzle box is cast in a new light here.

After an incredibly disturbing beginning, the narrative itself descends straight into hell. Literally. Barker combines his two main storytelling skills - dreamlike narratives and a penchant for the absurdly vile - to paint a picture of a glorious hell.

It benefits, greatly, from being the size of a normal novel. The work has clearly been heavily edited and though this does seem to have left a handful of plot threads un-resolved, the fact that The Scarlet Gospels is so accessible is very firmly in its favour. In many ways, this is the best of Barker; it combines the swift and to the point deftness of his Books of Blood with the elaborate and in-depth design of his later novels.

The Scarlet Gospels is very far from perfect, but it's also very readable and highly entertaining. A word of warning though; don't read this before going to bed, you'll have nightmares for a week.

ED FORTUNE

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WHITE KNUCKLE

AUTHOR: ERIC RED
PUBLISHER: SAMHAIN PUBLISHING
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 2ND

Horror - the more credible the threat, the better the capacity to un-nerve today's jaded audience. The late Richard Matheson knew this, as did Robert Bloch, taking the tropes of the horror story and firmly planting them in our own suburban lawns and on our highways.

Eric Red is the successor to Messrs Matheson and Bloch. And he proves it once again here with a 'road' story that is every bit as memorable as Matheson's Duel.

White Knuckle is the CB handle of a long distance trucker, who has operated as one of America's most prolific serial killers for forty years, with several hundred victims buried all over the USA. He chooses a victim at a truck stop, or forces them off the road then keeps them locked in a steel box between the wheels of his truck. He then sadistically toys with them and finally dumps the body in a shallow grave in a different state, having knocked out the victim's teeth out to further impede identification.

Enter Sharon Ormsby, a rookie FBI agent, who takes the case as an undercover assignment, taking to the road with a sympathetic long haulier to track down the killer who is out there, somewhere taunting on a CB radio. Possibly in an overtaking truck, possibly in the one in the rear view mirror.

Partly horror with a psycho on the loose, partly police procedural, it's a taut suspense story, and a welcome return to the road horror story by the man who defined this subgenre in the eighties with his original screenplays for cult classic films such as Near Dark and Hitcher.

The greatest strength of the book is the simplicity of the protagonist's motivation. White Knuckle murders without any real reason except for sexual gratification (necrophilia is alluded to) and the smug satisfaction of not being caught.

There is no padding in the story, the pacing moves as relentlessly as White Knuckle's black Kenworth truck. Literally, no filler – all killer. It should come as no surprise that the film rights have already been secured.

ROBIN PIERCE

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COSPLAY: THE FANTASY WORLD OF ROLE PLAY

AUTHOR: LAUREN ORSINI
PUBLISHER: CARLTON BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Lauren Orsini's Cosplay: The Fantasy World of Role Play is a love letter to one of geekdom's more misunderstood branches. Despite its relatively short length, it proves surprisingly comprehensive, covering a wide spectrum from anime to pop culture to furries. But more than that, it showcases the art (and yes it is an art), dedication and community of the vibrant subculture.

In her introduction, Orsini traces cosplay back to the 1939 World Science Fiction Convention where proto-cosplayers Forrest J. Ackerman and Myrtle R. Jones dressed in outfits inspired by the sci-fi flick Things to Come. They sparked what can only be dubbed a counter-cultural sea change. But it wasn't until 1984 that the term was coined by reporter and manga publisher Nobuyuki Takahashi, and then the genie was well and truly out of the bottle. It's since become a household term, with many involved finding celebrity status, corporate sponsorship and prosperous careers.

The rest of the book is broken down into five sections, each showcasing a different aspect of the diverse cosplay circuit. Anyone who's already involved will know all of the information on offer. It's more a gateway for people on the fence, watching from afar or just looking for a new hobby. That's not to say it only caters for newcomers. The strength of the book is the impressive gallery of high quality images that show off the many different permutations of costuming, the variations and, above all, the sense of belonging.

Some of the images aren't up to the same resolution as others, and it does make the book look like something fished from a bargain bin at The Works. But with the cosplayers' names given where known, and photographer credits duly listed, there's more than enough cues to go and start your own search. The images prove to be a great yardstick to glean the popularity of younger franchises; it's telling that there's plenty of Game of Thrones and Frozen cosplay. There's also the usual staples, from Darth Maul to Final Fantasy.

The text might repeat a lot of the same information, but it does touch on important issues. The most pressing being that cosplay is not consent. While it's only fleeting, it does get at the wider pervasive problem that plagues many conventions. But it also expresses the opportunities of new technology, namely 3D printing and the precision and possibilities it offers. The Fantasy World of Role Play is hardly the definitive word on the subject, but it'll make a cracking stocking filler.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

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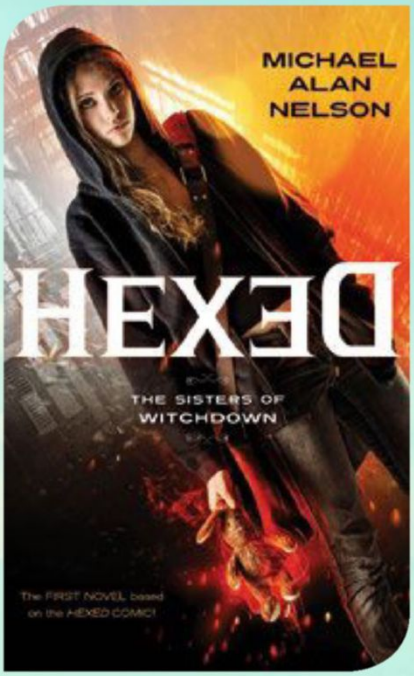

HEXED: THE SISTERS OF WITCHDOWN

MICHAEL ALAN NELSON
PUBLISHER: PROMETHEUS BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 5TH

Lucifer is a thief who steals dangerous magical artefacts from bad people before they can use them to do bad things, and as a result is a skilled navigator of the supernatural underworld that lies hidden beneath everyday life. Hired by a police officer to locate his kidnapped daughter when she is abducted by inexplicable forces, Lucifer must face enemies even she might not walk away from if she wants to stand a chance of rescuing the girl.

Although The Sisters of Witchdown's primary audience will be readers of the Hexed comics, it assumes no prior familiarity with them and can be understood without knowing their events. In fact, anyone who has read them will guess the direction the story is heading merely from the title alone, so it will actually be more of a mystery if approached with no background knowledge at all. It gives nods to the comics' events, such as one tangential but amusing chapter illustrating Lucifer's penchant for binding exorcised demons into stuffed toys, and maintains the same blend of supernatural horror and sarcastic humour.

Although comparisons to Buffy are abundant, if you want a similarity from the Whedonverse, Lucifer actually has more in common with future-Slayer Melaka Fray. As well as both being professional thieves, they are also snarky, cynical, isolated survivors hardened by a tough childhood without parental guidance or protection. Lucifer's talent for wrangling the supernatural makes it easy to forget just how young she is (while not even sure herself, she's somewhere in the vicinity of seventeen), and with her sidekick for much of the story being a handsome and charming young man (who is inconveniently also the boyfriend of the girl she's trying to save) she frequently becomes distracted by her increasing attraction to him and her jealously over the simple and carefree lives led by the teenagers she encounters.

The events of the book take place before the Hexed comics – both the four-issue miniseries from 2009 and the ongoing series revived in August last year – and acts as a prequel to them, partially bridging the gap left between the climax of Nelson's magnificent apocalypse horror saga Fall of Cthulhu – where Lucifer originated – and the point the series started. It details how Lucifer originally met her future benefactor Val Brisendine and features her first encounter with Graeae Tower, the home of the sinister company presided over by recurring antagonist Madame Cymbaline. There is also some recapped history of how Lucifer became the heir to the pseudo-demonic demigoddess the Harlot, who knows all of humanity's darkness as the Keeper of Secrets, which is a destiny Lucifer constantly searches for a way to free herself of. Additionally, some of Lucifer's backstory is explored, such as the origin of her lengthy real name Luci Jenifer Inacio das Neves, along with her youth in a Brazilian favela explaining both her indomitable attitude and her occasional outburst of Portuguese.

The Sisters of Witchdown is less one of the cash-in tie-in novels that take up a portion of the sci-fi section of your local Waterstones, and more an expansion of the world of Hexed through a different medium. Prose fiction allows for more detailed internal character thoughts and greater descriptions of what they're feeling, and the third person narrative allows us to get a greater understanding of what exactly Lucifer is driven by. The book is structured a little like a comic, with each chapter not necessarily concluding at the end of a scene, but at a suitably dramatic juncture or wham line timed to make readers immediately want more. It's a straightforward and untaxing read, but no less entertaining because of it.

ANDREW MARSHALL

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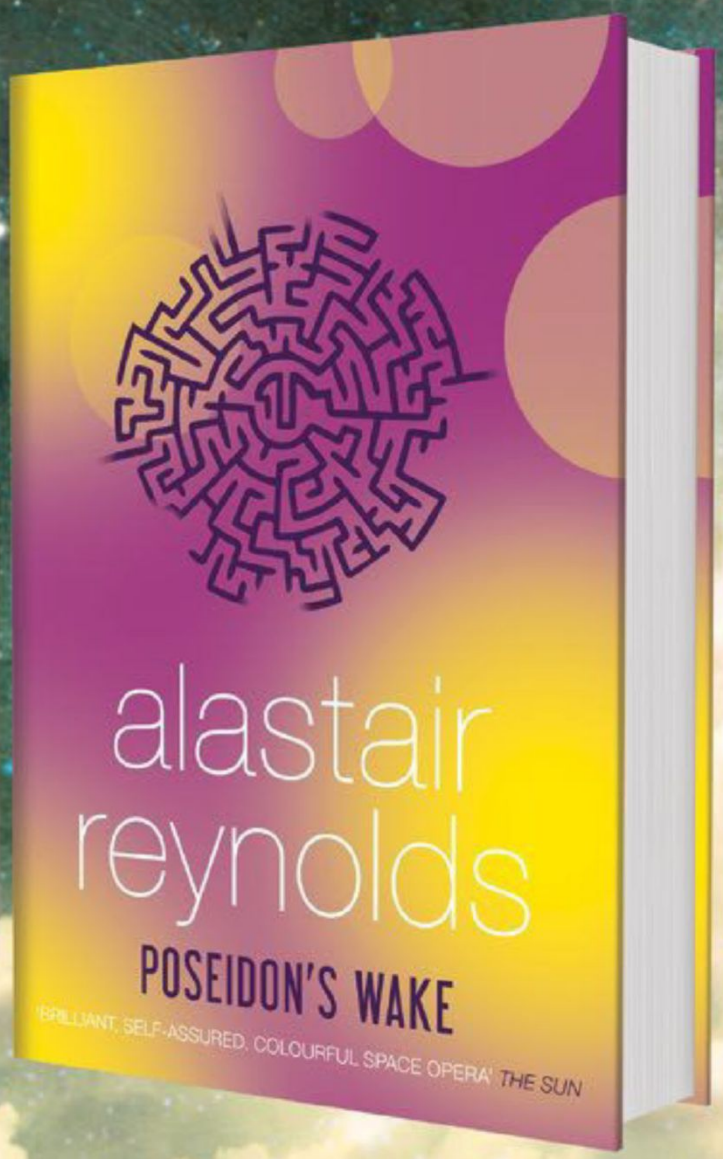
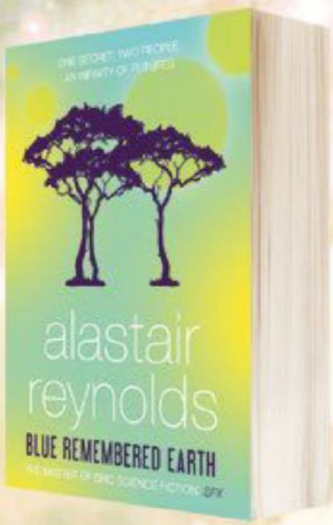
An impossible message.
An astonishing journey.
A race for the universe.





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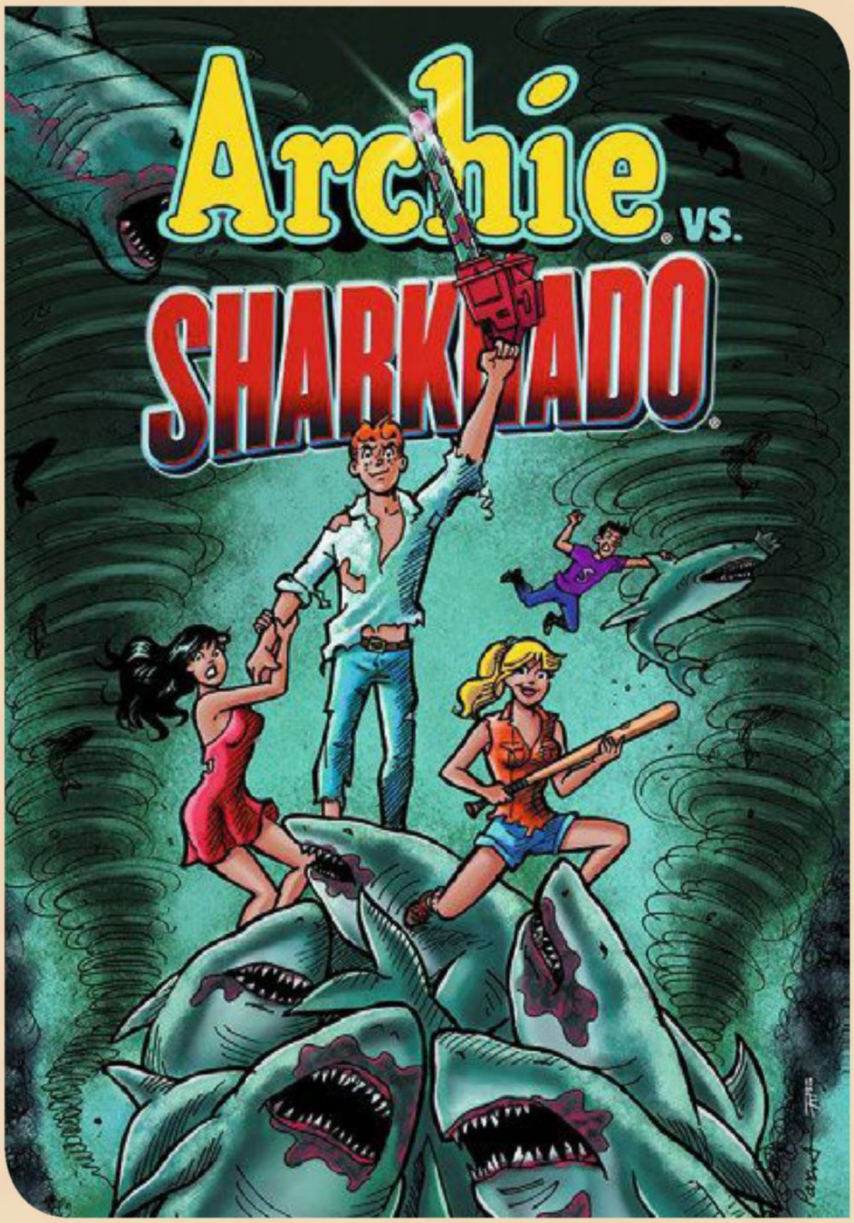
VIEW FROM THE WATCHTOWER

JOEL HARLEY PULLS MONITOR DUTY TO BRING YOU THE LATEST FROM THE WORLD OF COMIC BOOKS



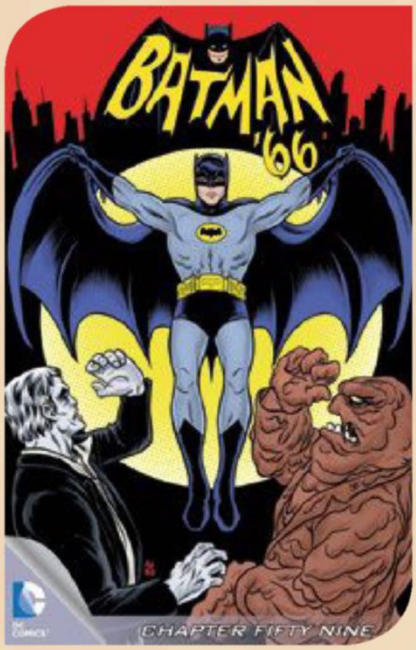
Déjà vu time, dear readers. We opened last month's *View From the Watchtower* with the news of Archie from off've *Archie Comics's* crossover with the Predator from *Predator.* In almost-as-implausible news, the next Archie crossover will see a Sharknado hit Riverdale in *Archie vs. Sharknado.* Quite how Archie became the go-to guy for fun comic book crossovers remains unseen (it's been years since Batman crossed paths with Predator or Judge Dredd – get on it, DC) but here we are. The 48-page comic will be illustrated by *Archie* regular Dan Parent and written by *Sharknado* director Anthony Ferrante. It'll be available to buy from July 22nd, the same day as *Sharknado 3: Oh Hell No!* airs on Syfy. Oh hell, no is about right.

From hell no's to goddamn Batmen: in a follow-up on a story we informed you of at a previous juncture, I ask you to cast your minds back to the rumours of Frank Miller's mooted sequel to *The Dark Knight Returns/ The Dark Knight Strikes Again.* Well, it's definitely happening and is to be titled – somewhat worryingly – *The Dark Knight III: The Master Race.* Anyone who has even half-followed Miller's work in recent years will know that the comics giant's views are hardly the most progressive, leaving us with work like *300* and his horrifying *Holy Terror.* That said, *The Master Race* will be co-written by Brian Azzarello and illustrated by Lee Bermejo. We're presuming that Azzarello will rein in Miller's worst impulses while Bermejo should do a fine job on art duties. However it turns out, it should be an interesting project, to say the least. I'd have preferred to see Frank finish *All-Star Batman & Robin* (shut up, I liked it) but this is good enough. *The Dark Knight III: The Master Race* is due to strike during fall 2015, and then again on a bi-monthly basis for eight whole issues. Oh hell yeah.

At the other end of the tonal spectrum, there's the news that the ever-cheery *Batman '66* is adding another famous face from the rogues gallery, in last month's *Chapter 59* – none other than the shape-shifting Clayface. Look out False Face, there's competition in town!

And that's roughly it for Batman news I can print without entering spoiler-y territory. To edge around the fringes of conversation, I'll just say that *Batman #40* finished its *Endgame,* culminating in a battle between Batman and Joker, a chainsaw and Tyrannosaur. It's been a drawn-out fight between the enemies, taking in all of Gotham City, Batman's supporting cast and the Justice League too. This June, that story is laid to rest, and the Dark Knight will Rise again (sorry – I'll stop soon) in a way many (save for those who actually read the book/ online spoilers) won't have seen coming. It's a very controversial direction, but one very much befitting what Snyder and Capullo have been doing since the very start of the New 52. Let's face it, it's not going to last, but it'll be interesting while it does. Find out what all the fuss is about in June's *Batman #41.*

In non-Batman, non-DC related news, we head over to the fine folks at Marvel Comics for something a bit more progressive than anything Frank Miller ever wrote; the de-closeting of long-time X-Man, Iceman. Well, good for him. It's made more complicated in true X-Men style, with only one version (young, past Iceman) being revealed gay while the other (modern-day Iceman) so far not. You can read all about it in *All-New X-Men #40* and *Uncanny X-Men #600.* What should we take away from this? Writer Brian Michael Bendis probably said it best: "*This isn't the final statement on Bobby's very unique story. And it's not*



a universal statement on sexual identity, it's Bobby's unique one. More layers will be peeled off this, including what that means for older Bobby." Well, it wouldn't be an *X-Men* story without everything being really needlessly complicated.

Talking of things being really needlessly complicated! Remember that one time Frank Castle died and was resurrected as a literal avenging angel? Or that other time when he died and was resurrected as Frankencastle (like Frankenstein, geddit - because his name is Frank Castle)? The poor Punisher gets another insane makeover in *Secret Wars: Battleworld #1*, which will see Frank Castle possessed by none other than Doctor Strange. No, really. "*What happens when Dr. Strange possesses the Punisher?*" asks the press release. "*Meet the sorcerer EXTREME.*" It's certainly a change of pace from shooting gangbangers in the face at point-blank range. At least the old guy hasn't died this time.

Taking a break from his Marvel Cinematic Universe cameos, Stan Lee is dipping back into actual comic book creation with a brand new project named *The Unknowns,* published by Arcana and Lee's POW! Entertainment imprint. Set to be a comic book series and animated series, it'll follow two teenagers as they chase down alien invaders while also keeping up the day job of rocking out in a touring band. Writer/producer Chris Wyatt describes the work as "***Ben 10** meets **Men in Black** with a rock and roll soundtrack.*" Maybe one for the kids, then.

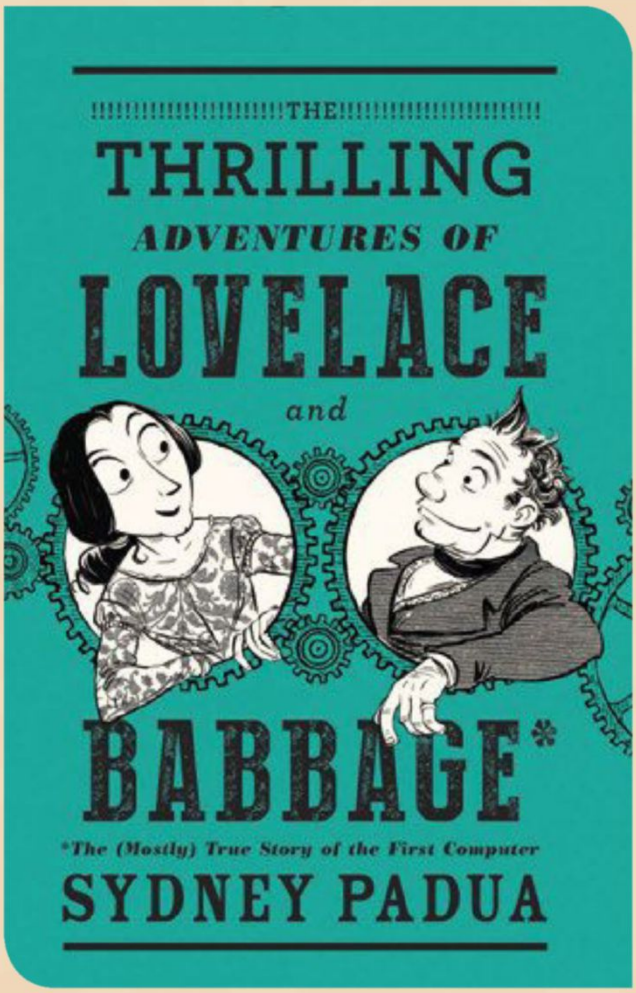
And, finally: it's become a tradition for this column to end on a sillier news story or particularly exciting crossover (usually Archie related, granted) – even when it opened with one. This month's comes in the form of Dynamite Comics' *Aliens/Vampirella,* which pits the aliens of *Aliens* against vampiress, Vampirella. The icons will clash this September, for a whole six issues, with Corinna Bechko and Javier Garcia-Miranda doing the writing and illustration business. That's not all though! No, before then, Vampirella will be meeting the one and only Ashley 'Ash' Williams in *Vampirella/Army of Darkness,* out in July. It's surely only a matter of time before one or both of them ends up crossing paths with a certain all-American teenager and his ever growing list of shark-jumping playmates.

And, inevitably, that brings us to a close for another month. I'll be back again in June - one dreads to think what nonsense Archie Andrews will be getting up to in that time.

Joel Harley can be contacted at:
joel.harley@starburstmagazine.com
and tweeted **@joelharley**

REVIEWS

THE LATEST COMIC BOOK RELEASES REVIEWED AND RATED



THE THRILLING ADVENTURES OF LOVELACE AND BABBAGE: THE (MOSTLY) TRUE STORY OF THE FIRST COMPUTER

WRITER & ARTIST: SYDNEY PADUA / PUBLISHER: PANTHEON / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It is generally accepted that Charles Babbage's Difference Engine was the world's first proto-computer. Even though the name of Charles Babbage doesn't automatically spring to mind when thinking of historically important figures, many may have some dim recollection of it even if they can't recall his achievements. Ada Lovelace, however, is a name that probably has no significance to any except those steeped in history. We were certainly unfamiliar with it until we read Sydney Padua's The Thrilling Adventures of Lovelace and Babbage.

Originally a web-based comic, this is the first time that this curious mix of historical fact and steampunk fiction has been available in hardcopy, and what a handsome volume it makes with its cloth-bound spine and quality paper stock.

Padua clearly has much affection for her protagonists, and for the first twenty or so pages she introduces the historical facts regarding Babbage and Lovelace. Babbage was an egotistical and often an irascible genius prone to fits of rage, and Lovelace was the daughter of Lord Byron, as well as a mathematical genius herself. She had a turbulent childhood with a mother who was so terrified that her daughter would follow her father's decadent path, that she was forced to study maths. As a result, Lovelace was more than Babbage's intellectual equal with her solving many of the Difference Engine's operational problems during the planning stage as well as writing proto-programmes. Lovelace died of cancer aged 36 and Babbage's Difference Engine was never realised.

Padua circumvents these facts by having the Difference Engine become a reality when it becomes a tool to fight crime, allows the pair to take on the American banking system, and open gateways to other dimensions. And there's a liberal amount of ray gun usage too.

It's beautifully drawn, with the artwork resembling something that might have appeared in The Strand or any other Victorian publication crossed with a contemporary style cartoon. Padua has clearly undertaken an exhaustive amount of research into Victorian Britain and the lead characters as she uses actual quotes in the exchanges between them. Practically every page has a footnote with interesting, and occasionally not so interesting, facts pertaining to the world as it was then. There's also excerpts from correspondence and books of that era so you cannot help but learn as you are being entertained.

So it's not quite a graphic novel, nor is it quite a book, but rather something unique; a tome that is brimming with an astounding amount of visual and cerebral humour that, as you read it, you can almost feel your own mind expanding to the point that you might, just might win a verbal sparring contest against Oscar Wilde.

CHRISTIAN JONES

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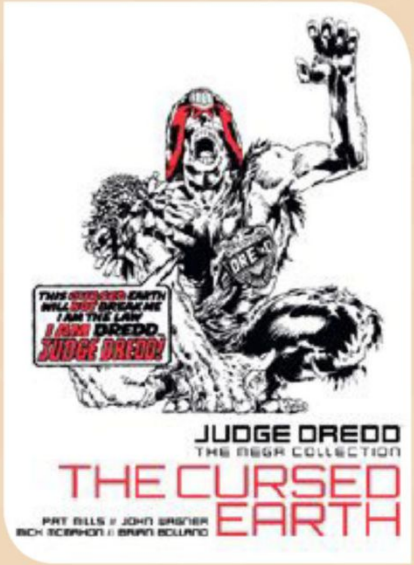

JUDGE DREDD - THE MEGA COLLECTION VOL 08: THE CURSED EARTH

WRITER: VARIOUS / ARTIST: VARIOUS / PUBLISHER: REBELLION/HACHETTE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

He's most often seen dealing with perps in the streets of Mega-City One, but Judge Dredd's world stretches much further – other stories have taken 2000 AD's leading lawkeeper to the Big Meg's Soviet counterpart, into outer space, and, perhaps most notably, to the post-apocalyptic wasteland that most of America has become – the Cursed Earth.

The Cursed Earth was explored in this early adventure, which lasted for twenty-five instalments in 1978 and became known as the first Dredd 'epic'. The west coast's Mega-City Two has become plagued by a virus that turns its inhabitants into ravenous cannibals. With MC-2's airports shut down, it's up to Dredd to take the long journey across the wastes with the vaccine. What do you mean, why can't they land the plane in the desert outside or parachute the vaccine in? Well, obviously not, because, well, erm, oh look, a dinosaur!

The vaccine story is essentially a backdrop to Dredd's adventures along the way, a series of encounters with the brutality of Mad Max and the daft satire of the Fallout games. There is indeed a dinosaur, in fact several – escapees from a dinosaur theme park. And yes, this came before Michael Crichton penned Jurassic Park. Dredd also encounters flying rats, a futuristic death race, and Mount Rushmore with a couple of new additions.

It's very silly compared to grittier modern Dredd and feels aimed at younger readers, but don't let this fool you into thinking The Cursed Earth is shallow fare – 2000 AD's sharp satirical edge is present in radioactive bucket-loads. A story about aliens sold into slavery is very critical of humanity's treatment of 'others', while the discovery of the last American president, kept in stasis by medic robots stealing blood for him, ends with a big jab at the American establishment as Dredd describes the war-faring president as "a vampire who puts even Dracula in the shade".

How this story depicts Dredd himself is very interesting – the usually stern Judge is the only guy standing up for the oppressed aliens, and, though he heads out into the Cursed Earth with a distrust of 'muties', the Dredd who arrives at Mega-City Two is one step closer to the Dredd who'd later stand up for 'mutie rights' in some of 2000 AD's most political stories.

Dredd's team of Judges, meanwhile – well, if this were Star Trek, their shirts would be red. Thankfully, Dredd has a couple of less boring sidekicks in Spikes Harvey Rotten, an untrustworthy punk biker who knows the Cursed Earth well (think Han Solo meets the Sex Pistols) and alien Tweak, whose gradually revealed backstory is unexpectedly sad.

Everything great about 2000 AD is present in this astounding variety of weird and wonderful adventures, particularly its firmly British satire. The Cursed Earth is classic Dredd ramped up to 11, and it really is a joy.

KIERON MOORE

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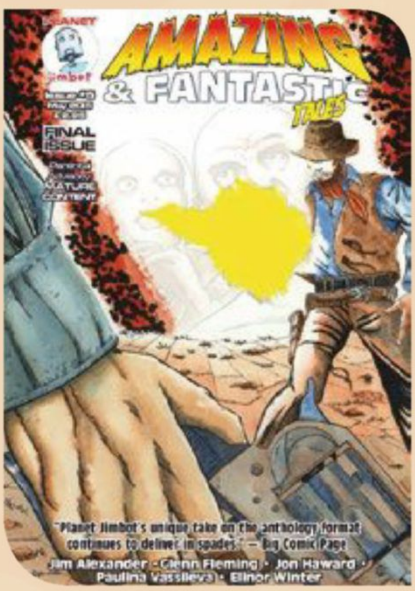

AMAZING AND FANTASTIC TALES #5

WRITER: JIM ALEXANDER / ARTIST: GLENN B. FLEMING, JON HAWARD / PUBLISHER: PLANET JIMBOT / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Indie imprint Planet Jimbot, founded by the two Jims of its namesake (Alexander and Campbell) prove there's still plenty of exciting rumblings in the indie comics scene. Amazing and Fantastic Tales, like the portmanteau comics of yesteryear, combines recurring episodic stories of sequential art and short stories, including one-offs and narratives that build over each issue.

As with the four issues before it, the fifth and final kicks off with Kroom, a metaphysical love story. The story is brought to a satisfying and surprising conclusion. The art from Glenn B. Fleming does have an awkward rigid quality, but the writing keeps the reader engaged.

It goes on to conclude Jim Alexander's western adventure story The Last Posse with a sly and pleasing end. But the highlight of the last issue is the story Facts of Life, penned by Jim Alexander with bold art from Jon Haward. It's a charming coming of age tale and family saga wrapped up in a few pages that's as disciplined as it is engaging.

It's strikingly odd, set well apart from any contemporaries, and a pleasing pay-off since the release of the first issue in 2013. It's a celebration of indie talent and a great platform for Jim Alexander to collaborate with different artists. It's fascinating to see his distinct writing paired off with so many different styles. If Amazing and Fantastic Tales is any indication, then Planet Jimbot still have plenty up their sleeves.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

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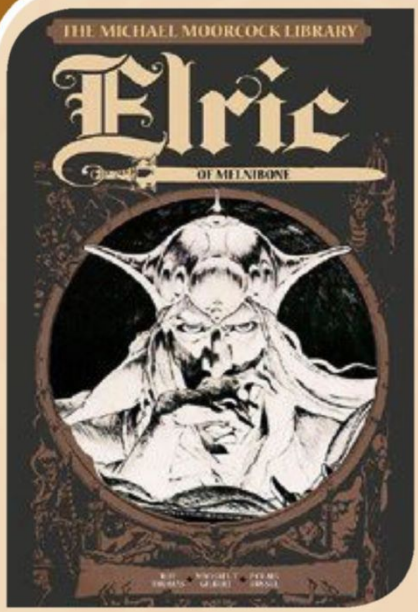


THE MICHAEL MOORCOCK LIBRARY VOL 1: ELRIC OF MELNIBONE

WRITER: ROY THOMAS / ARTIST: MICHAEL T. GILBERT, P. CRAIG RUSELL / PUBLISHER: TITAN COMICS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

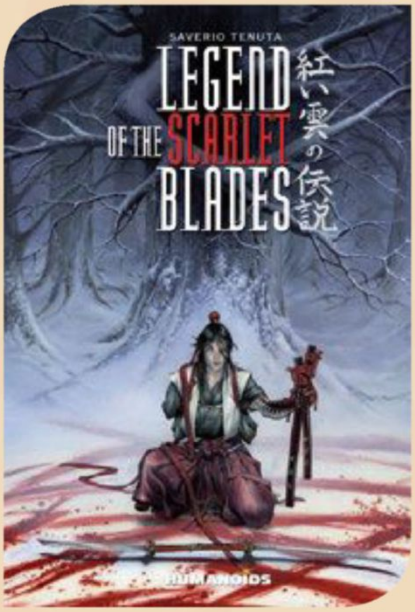
Michael Moorcock's hero is making a resurgence of late; as well as new comic book versions of Elric's adventures, publishers Titan have also released what they're calling The Michael Moorcock Library, a series of hardbacks that collects, restores and re-edits the classic comic adaptation from the 1980s.This first volume, Elric of Melnibone, tells the story of the doomed albino up to the point where he returns home with the famous sword Stormbringer, following a quest to retrieve his stolen love from the clutches of Yyrkoon, the would-be usurper.

It's aged well, a tale brilliantly told and lavishly illustrated. Michael T. Davis and P. Craig Russell broke the mould with their Art Nouveau style and, although it is sometimes overloaded with detail, the eyes of the reader are captured by every part of the pages, which are brought to life by unconventional layouts and sublime colouring. Davis and Russell brought Elric with them into a new age of comics, which is why it has lasted so well, but there are still moments that shock the reader out of the story. Yyrkoon, for instance, often looks like a cross between a cartoon character and a pantomime villain, while Rackhir the archer is essentially Errol Flynn dressed in red. Roy Thomas's script remains faithful to its source, praised by Moorcock himself in the introduction, although by today's standards it may feel somewhat overblown. However, like the art, it's something the reader quickly succumbs to; once begun, this is a book that can't be put down until the last page, a sometimes surreal and often dreamlike interpretation.

The publishers have put together a wonderful package, a good place to start for anyone interested in Moorcock's ill-fated character. Elric is arguably the hero many know about but have never read, and Titan have offered a fantastic opportunity to do so, one which will hopefully see the readers entranced enough to seek out Moorcock's novels. While it shows its age, which may prove divisive amongst fans, there's no denying the power of the story and the characters involved; the fact that, decades on, Elric's name is still on the lips of fantasy fans is testament to that strength, making him a hero deserving of space on everyone's shelves.

ALISTER DAVISON

8



LEGEND OF THE SCARLET BLADES

WRITER & ARTIST: SAVERIO TENUTA / PUBLISHER: HUMANOIDS INC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Set in feudal Japan, Legend of the Scarlet Blades tells the story of Raido, an amnesiac ronin in search of his past. He walks a world facing the onset of a terrible winter, a wilderness populated by mythic beasts, and cities where dark magic is commonplace. When Raido meets Meiki, a puppeteer, he discovers a bond with the young woman that enables him to assemble the pieces of his memory.

Writer and artist Saverio Tenuta has created a work of breathtaking beauty, each page a feast for the eyes, echoing the Japanese artwork from the time of the samurai. To this he's added detail and intricacy that makes it almost three-dimensional; from the layered armour of the warriors to the backgrounds of the streets and landscapes, nothing has escaped Tenuta's attention, giving depth to every panel. The colours border on the primal in their schemes, conveying a visceral atmosphere that sets the tone of the scene before a single word is read. As befits the era, there's plenty of swordplay and a fair amount of limbs and body parts sent flying by the eponymous swords, and the movements of the combatants are captured perfectly, giving a cinematic fluidity to each battle.

There's more to this book than stunning artwork; Tenuta tells an epic tale that, by focusing on its characters, is also very intimate. Raido initially appears to be somewhat of a cliché, but grows to become someone to care about; we feel his highs and his lows, the torment of his memory loss and the impact of the revelations as he discovers his purpose, his future as well as his past. The other characters are the same – including the villains – and their histories unfold to add further intrigue and poignancy to the story.

All this combines to create a sublime showcase for the comic book format. Here is a story that resonates through both words and art, one that is filled with symbolism and imagery worthy of any work of literature. Legend of the Scarlet Blades could have simply been an entertaining romp through medieval Japan, instead it's a stunning story that never patronises its readers, one with a moving ending and a denouement that may bring tears to the eyes. Once finished, the only disappointment is that there's nothing left to read, although it does spur the reader to return to the beginning and seek clues that may have been missed. A brilliant and emotional work, this is a book that everyone should know about.

ALISTER DAVISON

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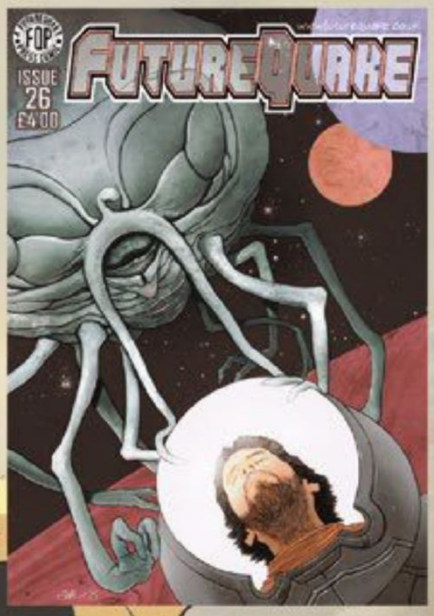

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ANIME-NATION

A MONTHLY ROUND UP FROM THE WORLD OF ANIME AND MANGA WITH DOMINIC CUTHBERT

ATTACK ON TITAN Live Action TV Series Ties Into Films

A live action series based on Hajime Isayama's hugely popular **Attack on Titan** manga is set to begin this August. It will tie directly into the events of the two live action movies (airing July and August), with many of the cast reprising their roles, including star Satomi Ishihara as Hanji. Unlike the chaotic events of the movies, the series will focus more on the complex everyday lives of the soldiers.

Plug Pulled on GARGANTIA ON THE VERDUROUS PLANET Season 2

While the second parts of the **Gargantia OVA** series are enjoying a theatrical run, Production I. G. has announced that they won't be producing a second season, naming unspecified difficulties with the production. There are plans, however, to conclude the story of **Gargantia** with a novel penned by Daishiro Tanimura (who worked on the TV series and **OVA**). It's set for a summer publication.

Anime Sols Ceases Operations

By the time you're reading this, anime streaming site Anime Sols will have shut down. The service allowed fans to watch series for free by cataloguing shows from high profile animation studios, as well as crowdfunding English subtitled DVD boxsets such as the classic 1969 **Dororo**. Unfortunately, due to finance issues and the nature of the highly competitive streaming market, the service had to close.

NARUTO Exhibition Kicks Off in Tokyo

An impressive exhibition has opened in Roppongi Hills' Mori Arts Centre Gallery to celebrate the end of the **Naruto** manga. There'll be artworks on display, alongside a theatre showing off popular scenes from the anime, and displays which bring the manga to life. Fans will also finally see what Copy Ninja Kakashi's face looks like under his mask. If that wasn't enough, visitors will also be able to purchase original items and feast on **Naruto**-themed meals. The exhibition is set to run until June 28th, before moving to Osaka until September 27th.

Cycling Manga Gets Anime

Taishi Miyake's 2002 cycling-themed manga **Long Riders!** is getting an anime adaptation. The manga follows five female college-age cyclists, and their goal to ride in the long distance event, Fresh. The manga has already inspired two touring guidebooks, a radio show, and a TV program, so an anime was inevitable.

COLUBOCCORO Reaches Kickstarter Funding Goal

Following the success of their previous crowd-funded project **Santa Company**, Kenji Studio have followed suit with a campaign to produce an English language version of the award winning sci-fi eco fable **Coluboccoro**. The film follows Suzu, a shaman who journeys out with the spirit of nature to bring peace to the environment.

DEATH NOTE Live Action Drama for July Debut

Adding to the fervour of **Death Note: The Musical** comes the news that the supernatural detective franchise is set for a live action TV drama. The series will differ from the movies released in 2006 and '08 respectively, with the first live action inclusion of fan favourite Near. But there's no word on whether his partner Mello will make an appearance. The series is set to air in July on NTV and will comprise of an entirely original plot and cast.

ASSASSINATION CLASSROOM Gets Live Action Sequel

Due to the phenomenal success of the live action movie based on Yūsei Matsui's oddball manga, which passed the 2.5bn Yen mark in Japan (approx. £14m), a sequel has been announced for a 2016 release. This also follows news of a second 22-episode season of the anime.

THE LATEST RELEASES REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS

THE AMBITION OF ODA NOBUNA

DVD / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR: YUJI KUMAZAWA / SCREENPLAY: MASASHI SUZUKI / STARRING: TAKUYA EGUCHI, KANAE ITÔ, HITOMI NABATAME, REI MATSUZAKI / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Based on the series of light novels by Mikage Kasuga (illustrated by Miyama-Zero), The Ambition of Oda Nobuna is a difficult series to place. Yes it's a high school drama to an extent, it's also alternate history and a romantic comedy, but mostly it's a fantasy harem adventure.

Like 2011's Battle Girls: Time Paradox, which saw schoolgirl Yoshino magicked away to an alternate feudal Japan, The Ambition of Oda Nobuna starts with high school student Yoshiharu Sagara mysteriously finding himself in an alternate Sengoku period. Having been saved on the battlefield by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (a hugely important general, samurai and politician of the time) at the cost of his life, Yoshiharu dramatically changes the course of history.

He's determined to make things right and find a way home. Trouble is, he's only clued up on the period because of the video game Nobunaga's Ambition he's obsessed with. He soon discovers that in this alternate past Nobunaga Oda doesn't exist and, as with Battle Girls, real life figures have been gender swapped. Instead, it's the teenage woman Nobuna Oda who is serving as daimyo of Owari and striving for hegemony.

The series opener, Nobuna and Monkey, is all exposition, explaining each character, their motivations and relationships and positioning Yoshiharu as Nobuna's 'monkey'. Like many teen boys, he's chest obsessed and this is his primary driving force for the early episodes. Part of the show's appeal is seeing him develop into a strategist and become an important part of Nobuna's entourage. Even when you'd think his character had evolved, he's still thinking with his dick and perving the place up.

The fault doesn't just lie with the central character alone. There's plenty of fan service, and this in itself doesn't become a problem until towards the end of the series where the boob jiggling (and size) reach farcical extremes. But it's the thinly veiled plot device to get the timid young strategist Hanbē out of her skivvies that makes for uncomfortable viewing. It's a fleeting scene that veils the whole series in a creepy scuzz.

Despite the hugely unflattering elements, it does take a look at the many roles of women in wartime. Nobuna herself is a fascinating and dynamic character, determined to fulfil her dreams. Watching her relationship with Yoshiharu develop over the 12 episode arc is one of the series' strengths. By the fifth episode, Recruiting a Genius Strategist!, it gets fantastical, and the Sengoku setting becomes more of a backdrop, but the political machinations of its warring characters remains. More of this would have been great, but the series juggles far too many characters, with many ending up looking the same or just impossible to care for.

The Ambition of Oda Nobuna sometimes subverts the harem subgenre, but often falls prey to many of its slimy conventions. It's problematic, yes, but if you can look past that it's an entertaining, funny and well-animated series.

Extras: *Trailers*

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

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KOIMONOGATARI

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: AKIYUKI SHINBO, TOMOYUKI ITAMURA / SCREENPLAY: AKIYUKI SHINBO, FUYASHI TOU / STARRING: HIROSHI KAMIYA, EMIRI KATOU, YUI HORIE, SHIN'ICHIRÔ MIKI / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Koimonogatari is the final instalment in the Mongatori Series Second Season, and takes its story from the twelfth book in Nisio Isin's light novel series. It's an avant garde approach to anime, culminating in a story arc which is as much an occult tinged detective story as it is a cosmically fated love story.

The six-episode story, titled Hitagi End, follows on from previous release Shinobu Time. It sees Hitagi ask con man Kaiki, whom she hates, to deceive the recently made deity of snakes, Nadeko. She is planning on killing Hitagi and Koyomi when they graduate only 74 days later. He reluctantly agrees, and kick-starts a narrative with all the nuance of a good detective novel with the endearing weirdness that typifies the franchise. Kaiki is an engaging main character, both morose and calculating and he certainly makes a change from Koyomi dominating the screen with his creepy antics.

The lush animation combines traditional character models on top of pristine CG backdrops and settings. The visual aesthetic is uniform with previous arcs, maintaining the same trippy subtleties and flashcards brandishing the protagonist's inner thoughts.

There's no English dub, but given the weighty themes and distinct visual flair, that won't be much of an issue for fans. Newcomers might find the style overwhelming, but it's one of the strongest entries so far and there's enough context to sink into the narrative.

Although the story is often long-winded, it's a powerful study of the human condition with an ending that'll take you completely by surprise. Quirky, moving and delightfully unusual, Koimonogatari is for those looking for something more cerebral.

Extras: *TV Spots / Openings / Trailers*

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

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PIXEL JUICE

NEWS AND PREVIEWS IN GAMING BY LEE PRICE

SILENT HILLS Cancelled

The fallout from Hideo Kojima parting ways with Konami has officially started as the company has revealed that the hotly-anticipated **Silent Hills** has been cancelled.

The game, which was to see Kojima and Guillermo del Toro team up to deliver a reboot that already looked set to be one of the best in the series, had been preceded by the excellent **P.T.** playable demo. Said demo was amongst the scariest things we have seen on a console. However, it has also been pulled from PSN so fans of the series who didn't get their hands on it will be missing out even more. The situation is such that PS4s with the demo installed are popping up on eBay for ridiculous prices, regardless of the fact that PSN accounts will play a large part in anybody even being able to play the thing.

In a statement release to Kotaku, the company said: "*Konami is committed to new **Silent Hill** titles, however the embryonic **Silent Hills** project developed with Guillermo del Toro and featuring the likeness of Norman Reedus will not be continued. In terms of Kojima and del Toro being involved, discussions on future **Silent Hill** projects are currently underway, and please stay tuned for further announcements.*"

So it looks likely that we will be getting more **Silent Hill**, just not the game we were looking forward to. There's no reason that Konami can't deliver a good product, of course, seeing as they have done it a number of times already with the series, but the team of Kojima and del Toro looked set to produce something spectacular, and that will be hard to beat.

There is no word yet on what Kojima plans to do after Konami, but it would be wonderful if the duo combined to create their own horror franchise in the wake of this falling out.

COMING SOON

YOSHI'S WOOLLY WORLD

PLATFORM: WII U
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 26TH

It's been a long time since we last saw Yoshi star in its own videogame. In fact, you need to go all the way back to the criminally underrated Yoshi's Story on the N64 to find the last example. However, the little green dinosaur thingy is coming back with Woolly World, which bears more than a slight resemblance to Sony's LittleBigPlanet series. Aesthetics aside, the wool actually appears that it will have a large bearing on the gameplay, as it can be used as a weapon in addition to being part of a transformation system. Exciting stuff for Wii owners.

COMING SOON

DECEPTION IV: THE NIGHTMARE PRINCESS

PLATFORM: PS4, PS3, VITA
RELEASE DATE: JULY 17TH

Tecmo Koei's devilish little strategy game has caused enough of a stir to warrant a Western release and it should be high on the list of potential purchases for anybody who likes some occult themes with their gaming. The title is an updated version of Blood Ties and sees a new character coming into the fold as well as the strategic combat that fans of the series have come to love. Definitely one worth exploring, as it promises to be a little different to the cookie-cutter stuff offered by larger developers.

DEAD ISLAND 2 Delayed

Yager has announced that the upcoming **Dead Island 2** is to be delayed until 2016, which is quite the shunt backwards from the originally intended release date of spring of this year.

In a statement, the company said: "*We have always set ourselves a big goal for **Dead Island 2**: to create the sequel that takes **Dead Island** to the next level, A game that takes what our fans tell us they love about **Dead Island** – multiple different characters to play with, co-op, and turning a paradise setting into a zombie slaughter melee – and a game that adds a ton more content and combat options on top of that. And we wanted to have all of that done for release in spring 2015.*

*We have been looking at the game long and hard, and we have decided we didn't reach that goal we set out to achieve quite yet. This is why we have decided to delay **Dead Island 2** to 2016.*"

If it brings about a better game than we are all for such delays. Hopefully it's not indicative of problems behind the scenes though, as that is an enormous difference between intended release and new release date. As long as it allows the developers to improve on the popular, but a little mediocre, **Dead Island** than this delay should be a good thing.

Telltale Partnering With Marvel on New Game

It seems that Telltale simply can't help but make headlines in recent months. Fresh from their newly announced collaboration with Lionsgate and the revelation that the company will finally start working on original IPs, comes the news that they are also set to work with Marvel on a new game.

Little has been revealed thus far, though it is probably safe to assume that Telltale's penchant for adventure games will continue in a new universe. All that is known at the moment is that the project will see the light of day in 2017.

It will be interesting to see where this goes and if the resulting games tie in to the cinematic universe or follow the comics more closely. Regardless, Telltale have continued to come up with the goods in recent months and this announcement signals the start of some increasingly exciting times for Marvel games going forward.

BORDERLANDS Creator Leaves Gearbox

Fans of the excellent **Borderlands** games have reason to worry about the future of the franchise as it was revealed this month that series creator Matt Armstrong has left the Gearbox team to explore other opportunities.

In a tweet announcing his departure Armstrong stated: "*Things changed. No longer working at Gearbox Software. I will always love Gearbox, but it's adventure time.*"

The "Things changed" line seems to indicate that there were some internal problems that led to Armstrong leaving, although nothing is known for certain right now. With a little luck we should see him re-emerge with a new concept at some point in the future.

COMING SOON

THE FLAME IN THE FLOOD

PLATFORM: XBOX ONE, PC, MAC
RELEASE DATE: JULY 2015

An interesting, Kickstarter-funded project from some of the guys that worked on BioShock Infinite, The Flame in the Flood looks set to be a survival game that takes a slightly different slant to many others. Playing as Scout and her erstwhile canine companion, the player is tasked with travelling around islands on a hastily crafted raft, scouring each for supplies while trying to survive. The environment can also play a part, as a fall in the water will soak Scout and lead to her getting a cold. Sounds like an interesting mix between Wind Waker and The Last of Us, with plenty of its own ideas to merit a look.

COMING SOON

ADRIFT

PLATFORM: PS4, XBOX ONE, PC
RELEASE DATE: Q2 2015

Now this one looks very interesting. Adrift puts you in the battered spacesuit of an astronaut who has woken up to a wrecked space vessel and no idea what happened. Using a first person perspective, you must explore the ruined ship to try to piece together the events that led to this situation, while also attempting to repair the escape pod that is the only way you have any chance of getting home. Zero gravity is a big feature, as is ensuring you have enough oxygen to continue exploring. We're getting flashbacks to the wonderful Exile from days gone by.

New GUITAR HERO Announced

In a 'shocking' move, Activision has announced that they will be bringing a new **Guitar Hero** to gamers at some point this year. We are sure this isn't a response to the enthusiasm generated by the announcement of **Rock Band 4** earlier in the month, and most certainly doesn't ably demonstrate the company's penchant for jumping on a bandwagon as soon as possible.

Perhaps that is a touch unfair, as the company seems to have a solid idea or two for the franchise. They will be debuting something called **GH Live**, where players play from a first person perspective, with a crowd that reacts in real time.

Alternatively, you can give **GHTV** a crack, where you can play along to official music videos. That seems to take away a little from the escapist fantasy that games like this provide, but I guess it's at least something a little different. A new guitar controller will also be debuted.

Activision Publishing CEO, Eric Hirshberg said: "***Guitar Hero*** *is a franchise that so many people love. Figuring out how to bring it back with true breakthrough innovation has been years in the making, and a labour of love.* ***Guitar Hero Live*** *lets people rock real crowds with real reactions. Our goal was literally to give people stage fright. And with* ***GHTV****, we have created the world's first playable music video network. All of it is playable on consoles, or mobile devices.* ***Guitar Hero*** *is back and better than ever.*"

So it looks like the war between Activision and Harmonix is set to continue. We know who our money's on, but it should be interesting nonetheless.

New Vita Design May Be On the Way

A recent trademark filing made by Sony in Japan appears to indicate that there may be a new version of the Vita on the way.

The filing doesn't seem to be for a new console, which has led to some speculation about what the redesign will offer to make the handheld more appealing to consumers.

Leading the pack is the rumour that Sony will incorporate a HDMI port, which could see the console used to play its games on larger screens.

There are other design changes as well, though little else is known about what Sony have planned with this one.

STREET FIGHTER's Ryu May Be Coming to SMASH BROS

Now here is an interesting development. It appears, though it is yet to be confirmed, that Ryu of **Street Fighter** fame may be on his way to becoming a DLC character for the latest **Smash Bros** game.

The rumour mill was started when the DLC for adding Mewtwo to the game also had additional data that included music for the character. The data was decrypted by Reddit user Shinyquagsire, who discovered the **Street Fighter** theme in addition to other music that indicated that Roy, from the **Fire Emblem** games, is also on his way.

Nothing is confirmed at the time of writing, though this would be a brilliant addition to the series if true.

COMING SOON

ENERGY HOOK

PLATFORM: XBOX ONE, PS4, PS VITA
RELEASE DATE: Q2 2015

This one looks like it could be something a little special. Partly funded via Kickstarter and developed primarily by the man behind the excellent Spider-Man 2 game from the PS2 era, Energy Hook utilises similar swinging mechanics as its core gameplay element. Set at some point in the future, where there appears to have been a catastrophic event of some sort that has taken place, the player engages in a new sport that involves building your own energy hook and using it to compete in races and obstacle courses. It sounds interesting and should certainly be worth a look.

COMING SOON

GOD OF WAR III REMASTERED

PLATFORM: PS4
RELEASE DATE: JULY 17TH

It says something about the state of the gaming industry during the summer months that one of the bigger releases is a fancified version of a game that has been out for five years. Still, Sony saw some success with their remastered version of The Last of Us, so this will likely sell well too. Plus, the classic gameplay of the series will still be intact so it is worth a play for anybody who has missed out on the series thus far. It would be nice to see some newer IP coming along though, if we're being honest.

Konami Delists Itself from New York Stock Exchange

Konami's ongoing turmoil shows no signs of abating, as the company has recently deregistered itself from the New York Stock Exchange in the wake of the fallout with Hideo Kojima.

While the company has downplayed the move, stating that New York only plays a small part in its overall trading volumes, it's still a significant move that appears to indicate that there is even more going on behind the scenes than what we have been able to see on the surface.

The move may be part of the internal restructuring that is going on at the company right now, and there is no word on whether or not they intend to reinstate themselves once all the furore over the Kojima saga has blown over.

All that is known at the moment is that it is worrying times for one of gaming's most-storied developers. Here's hoping that it isn't the end of an era.

THE LATEST GAMING RELEASES REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS

DUNGEONS 2

DEVELOPER: REALMFORGE STUDIOS / PUBLISHER: KALYPSO MEDIA DIGITAL / PLATFORM: PC (STEAM) / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Are you sick of self-righteous good guys who always steal the show, and beat the bad guy? Well, Dungeons 2 gives the player the chance to fight back...

Dungeons 2 is the sequel to Dungeons (but you may have figured that out already), released back in 2011. Dungeons received fair reviews, earning pretty average scores across the board. So, is this an upgrade to the original?

At first, the game is relatively linear. There are set objectives to do, but you can go at your own pace and build up the basics you need to build, whether the narrator tells you to or not. If you don't, you'll find yourself without a vital hospital or workshop later in the game. As the levels progress, however, you find yourself with more and more to do.

There's never a dull moment, and you don't get a break; but that's a good thing. Nothing is more laborious than sitting at your desk, waiting for your gold reserves to increase just enough for you to buy another orc. While you're waiting, you can get the goblins to start researching new things, or send some workers (workers in this game are called little snots, and they are adorable) to mine out the caves and explore, or just use your giant hand to punch any slacking minions.

The real-time strategy further emphasises the necessity for you to stop mucking around and work, but tragically, the game suffers from not giving your dungeon enough to defend against. Occasionally, you'll get a group of do-gooders enter your dungeon from the over world, in a vain, fruitless attempt to dethrone the ultimate evil. However, they rarely come in groups bigger than 5, which can be halved by a well-placed trap, and then finished off by a couple of irritable orcs. We'd love it if it got increasingly difficult, to the point of dreading each incoming invasion and adding to the urgency. Unfortunately with the amount of pressure that the alliance puts on your dungeon, they may as well be giving free massages, such is the lack of danger they pose.

The game itself is a bit fiddly. There is a lot of clicking and micromanaging to do, and unless you're a robot, built in a laboratory and designed specifically to press the mouse, or alternatively a StarCraft player, you'll take a long time to fully master the system. Just make sure your mouse can handle it. And once you've done that, make sure your PC can handle it. Massive armies can be a real drag on your performance, turning the epic battles into PowerPoint Presentations. With the game's release, more detailed graphics options will come, and we advise you be frugal, lest you suffer the wrath of turning your legion into a jerky, stuttering mess.

Not only do you have to click rapidly, but also with the pinpoint accuracy of a trained sniper. Often times come when you want to control a certain unit in a horde. Maybe to initiate a flanking tactic, or to have them retreat and heal up. Unfortunately, in the mess of flailing minion limbs, it's difficult to select the required attacker, and in turn, difficult to master those elite manoeuvres you've been strategizing for oh-so very long indeed.

One of the highlights in this game is the narration. Credit goes to the writers of the dialogue, and to Kevan Brighting, who shines once again as he did back in The Stanley Parable. Talking to you from an unknown realm with his constantly judging, but enviably British accent, the narrator is not seen on screen, and we don't know who he is, or why he's seemingly sworn to be the eternal advisor to the ultimate evil - we're glad he has though!

The game also takes every opportunity it can to demolish the fourth wall like an old and dilapidated industrial district that the council want to replace with a lovely little housing estate. Your workers wave at you through the screen, the references are endless and beautiful, ranging from an attack that does '1337' damage, to a nod to one of the best Simpsons episodes of all time. At one point, the narrator even indulges you in a satirical advertisement, asking you to buy all the company's other games.

To summarise, this game has blown the original Dungeons out of the water, improving dramatically on it. It's by no means perfect, forcing you to drag the graphics bars into the negatives, making it difficult to strategize by forcing you to click on your legion and hope you get the minion you want, and bombarding you with fourth wall breaking gags (they're very funny, but there's a line in the sand, and this game is teetering). However, it provides a lot of fun. There's never a lull in the action, levels are unique and enjoyable, and it's very satisfying to watch your dungeon functioning like clockwork. At £35, we'll admit it's a bit expensive, but we can't deny one other thing: it's bloody fun.

TOM ACTON

8

SPACE HULK: ASCENSION DARK ANGELS DLC

DEVELOPER: FULL CONTROL STUDIOS / PUBLISHER: FULL CONTROL / PLATFORM: PC, MAC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

As the final expansion to Space Hulk: Ascension, it seems only fitting that Full Control reintroduced the chapter which started it all. Having been absent from all too many releases over the past years, the long wait to see elite Deathwing forces once more battling Genestealers has been well worth it. Even without the nostalgia rush, this particular chapter proves to be one of the best additions to the Ascension to date.

In many respects the Dark Angels here emulate the Ultramarines, remaining a range-focused faction with a primary emphasis upon versatility. While they lack the close-range ferocity of the Space Wolves, the weapons choices of the Salamanders or even any real positive stats modifiers, their advantage lies in their overall design and tactical approach to war.

Even more so than the other chapters, their special abilities and support elements place great emphasis upon close support and co-ordination. Along with having the unique class of Apothecary capable of boosting the Terminators' combat performance, the Librarian's sparky new powers are less about mind bullets than they are enhancements. One of the earliest ones proves to be a godsend, as it allows the psyker to grant additional action points to nearby units. The chapter is very much the jack of all trades choice, well suited to someone desiring tactical flexibility, and is backed by unique and very meaty plasma cannon options; a weapon which doesn't so much kill Genestealers as burn through them by the dozen.

The missions this time are notably far more difficult than past outings, with a campaign clearly intended for experienced players. With an opening mission which leaves the squad in the open, divided with many nearby spawn points for Tyranids, it's not a campaign with a difficulty curve so much as a brick wall. Navigating the labyrinthine network of tunnels and keeping everyone alive proves to be especially difficult, though many of the objectives ultimately boil down to a repeat of what we've seen before. It's certainly challenging, but it lacks the additional variety found in some prior expansions, and it's especially notable if you jump from the Salamanders' adventurous maps to the more static campaign here.

Really though, if you've been holding off on Ascension to see if things might get better, now's the time to grab it. While it might be lacking the ebon armoured Iron Hands chapter (damn it) or a few fan favourites, the variety of forces on offer, depth of combat and multiple lengthy campaigns makes this a worthy purchase. As easily one of the best adaptations of Space Hulk to date, this is one no avid fan of the grim, dark far future should be without.

CALLUM SHEPHARD

7

NEKRO (EARLY ACCESS)

DEVELOPER & PUBLISHER: DARKFORGE GAMES LLC / PLATFORM: PC, MAC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW (STEAM EARLY ACCESS)

If you ever wondered what might happen if a more arcade version of Diablo had a child with Dungeon Keeper, wonder no more.

Blending RPG-lite elements with grim humour, exaggerated stylised locales, a booming narrator and gleaming red gore, Nekro is a true gem of a game. One which harkens back to past eras in the best way possible, aiming for competent performance over ground breaking ideas but backing that up with fantastic atmosphere and laughs a plenty.

Your task here is simple: you're undead now. Go in, start killing the corrupted King's lackeys and keep killing until his head is on a pike, and build your dark powers along the way. It's as simple as that, the game releases you into an arena of death to have your fun, with no knowing of what you can kill or where you can stop, and you're left to rampage about the environment. The real fun of this stems from the exaggerated fantasy stereotypes, each of which carries a dark twist to them in the manner of an Overlord game.

While simplistic, the actual combat itself remains relentlessly satisfying thanks primarily to the upgrade system and some fairly varied classes. Some offer low damage but self-healing, others have slow attacks but a ranged fighting style. While they do ultimately fall into the usual categories in one way or another, what keeps them going the creative team's efforts in putting a grim spin on how they operate. Rather than having a bow for example, the ranged choice boots explosives at his foes from a range. This is further backed by a series of summoned creatures, most of which will leave the game's enemies as little more than a quivering pile of bones once they are done.

What allows the game to stand up above all else is the enemy variety and a series of intrinsically warped and differing levels. No single thing remains truly overplayed or overused here and despite its small scale, the developers remain able to constantly introduce new elements allowing the experience to remain ever fresh.

Nekro ultimately plays and feels like something from the PlayStation era of gaming, but in the absolute best way possible. Much like Marlow Briggs and the Mask of Death, the developers were not afraid to update or add elements here and there, but the spirit and fun concepts are ever present at its core. Even in its early state it remains a solidly entertaining experience, and this is definitely a one to look into for anyone after a game which remains utterly bloody hilarious from beginning to end.

CALLUM SHEPHARD

8

TV presenter and arcade collector
Jonathan Thompson presents...

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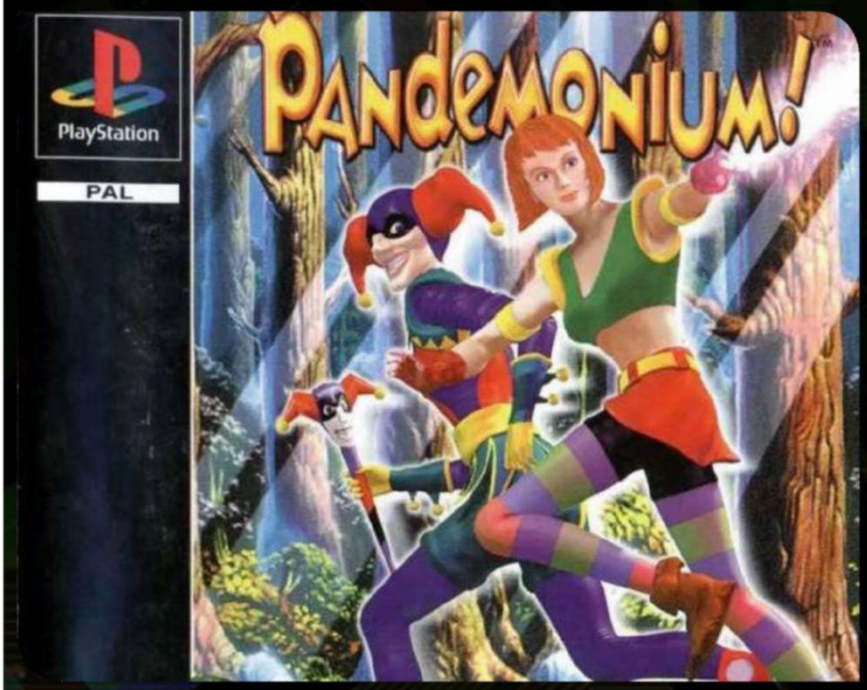
RETRO BYTES

A LOOK BACK AT THE WORLD OF RETRO GAMING BY CHRIS JACKSON



BRAWLS COUNT ANYWHERE

Regular readers (if indeed there are any that don't skip over these two usually hastily-written the day before deadline pages) might remember that we've spent the last couple of months having a good old grumble about terrible games. To help recover from the horrors of *The Wizard of Oz* (even typing the name made me shudder just then, even though it's been three whole months since I endured it), here's a few games that are actually fun! And they all involve battering things in one way or another. We all enjoy a bit of that now and again, don't we?

PANDEMONIUM (1996)

Kicking us off this month is a massively underrated platformer from US developers Toys for Bob, who would later go on to create the massively successful *Skylanders* franchise. A simpler game from a simpler time, at first glance *Pandemonium* doesn't seem to have much to offer. It isn't the prettiest game ever made; the story serves its purpose, but is basic at best, and controls are limited to nothing more than jump and attack, but chances are that after a couple of levels you'll be so hooked that you won't even notice those minor downsides.

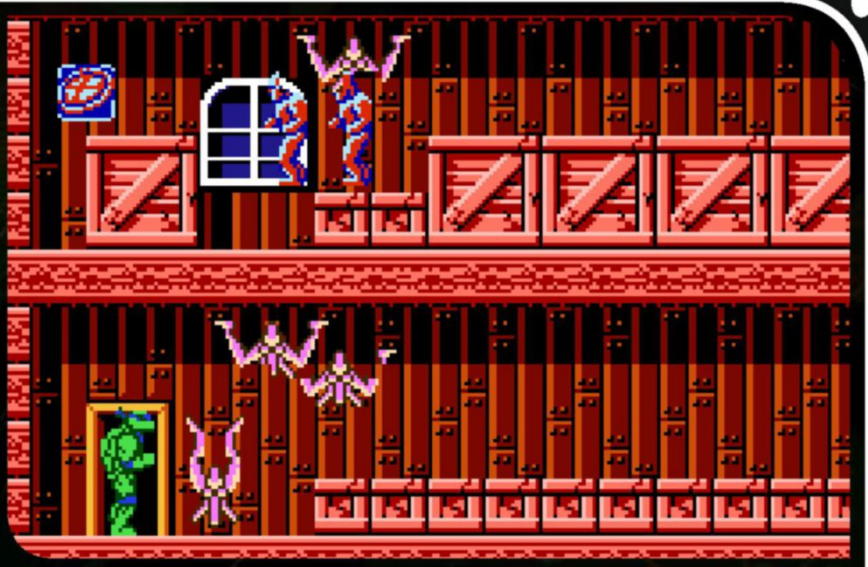
The story (or what there is of one) involves a pair of trainee wizards - a jester called Fargus and a nimble sorceress named Nikki. While secretly trying out some powerful spells from a stolen book, they accidentally summon a huge demon that eats the nearby village. As you can probably guess, your mission is to banish the demon and restore the village. To do this, Fargus and Nikki must travel to the 'Wishing Engine' - basically a version of a genie that will grant them three wishes.

'Travelling across the land' is a cracking reason to put together a game where each level is different to the last, and that's exactly what you get with *Pandemonium*. After choosing whether you want to play as Fargus with his cartwheel attack, or Nikki with her double jump (hint: the answer is Nikki - the slightly strange 2.5D perspective means her jumping ability is extremely useful), things start out quite gently with a basic run and jump platform level. Don't be fooled though - each subsequent level adds something new (tornadoes, slides, air streams, spike traps etc.) until you reach the point where it's just absolute chaos towards the end of the game.

Throw in a few different power-ups, collectables, bonus stages, boss fights, and sections where you can be transformed into a variety of different animals each with their own abilities, and *Pandemonium* manages to feel interesting and exciting all the way to the very end of its eighteen levels. 1997's imaginatively-titled sequel *Pandemonium 2* is also worth seeking out if this is the sort of thing you enjoy. A short-lived but fondly remembered (by me, at least) series that's still as fun and exciting to play today as it was on its release nearly twenty years ago. Give it a try and let us know how you get on!

STARBURST

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (1989)



At one point there was half a plan to do an entire Turtles-themed column, but then it turned out most Turtles games are pretty much identical to each other and it didn't seem worth spending two pages getting confused about which one had the slightly better animations or whatever. Although it would have been a good excuse to refer to the *Turtles in Time* game as *Turtles: TIT* which might have been rather amusing. Never mind, eh? Oh, I guess I've kind of done it now. Hooray!

The first Turtles game was released on the NES in 1989, and later ported (badly, thanks to the usual "*quick lads, get it in the shops before Christmas!*" scenario) to the C64, Spectrum, Amiga and various other home computers. Subsequent titles fell into a bit of a rut, mostly being *Double Dragon*-style arcade beat 'em ups with nothing to really differentiate one from the other, but the original Turtles game crammed in just enough ideas to make it stand the test of time.

Throughout the course of your mission to defeat Shredder (what else did you think you'd be doing?), players are able to take control of whichever Turtle they choose. If you start running low on health and can't find any slices of pizza to top yourself up with (what else did you think you'd be eating?), all you need to do is swap to a healthier Turtle on the pause screen and you're good to go. If a Turtle loses all his health, he'll be captured by the evil Foot Clan until you reach a point in the game where you're able to rescue lost allies. But if all four Turtles end up being kidnapped, that's it, game over...

Keeping the little green lads alive and free through the game's mix of side-scrolling fighting/platforming parts and top-down exploration/shoot 'em up sections is no easy task. Expect to be constantly harassed by a vast array of enemies while you make your way through the sewers to disarm some underwater bombs at the dam before rescuing Splinter, and finally battling Shredder inside the enormous Technodrome. The underwater level is one of gaming's all-time trickiest, as the strict time limit doesn't allow much scope for making mistakes. If the narrow path through poison seaweed doesn't finish you off, furiously button-mashing to get through sets of electric hazards before time runs out probably will. It's quite challenging for something that should really be a game for kids, but keep it in mind if you're feeling particularly tough one afternoon!

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD (1995)

These pair of idiots starred in several games during the height of their fame in the mid-'90s. The Mega Drive, Super Nintendo, Game Gear, Game Boy and PC all received different B&B titles, and some were much, much better than others...

The best of the bunch is easily the PC version, *Virtual Stupidity* - a point and click adventure game featuring all the familiar characters and locations from the show, which is as close as most of us will ever get to directing our very own episode. With the PC being much more powerful than current consoles, it was by far the best looking and sounding **B&B** game at the time, with cutscenes appearing as though they were taken directly from a regular TV episode. Home consoles understandably fared less well in this department, but the games made up for that in other areas.

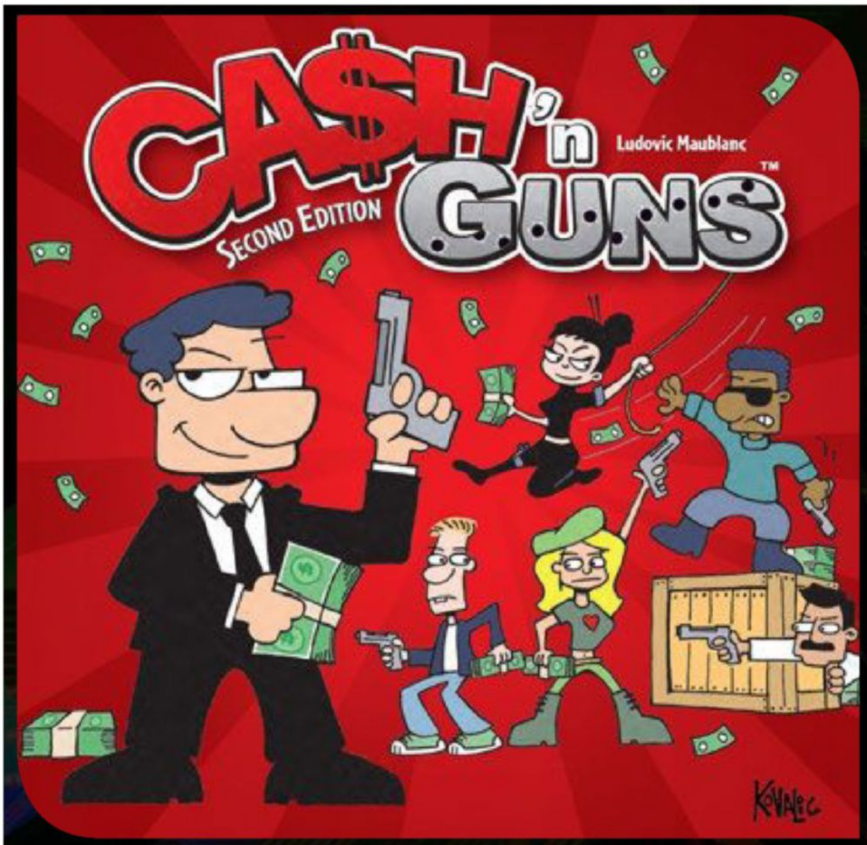
Ignoring the Game Boy and Game Gear versions because we're trying to keep things positive this month, the two other **B&B** games to look out for appeared on the Mega Drive and Super Nintendo. The most straightforward version was on the SNES - a sort of side-scrolling beat 'em up in which Beavis and Butt-Head are trying to score free tickets to a GWAR concert by taking photos of themselves doing "cool" things in order to impress the band. It's fairly unremarkable really, but the satisfying combat (ever wanted to knock an old granny flat on her back by smacking her round the face with a boxing glove on a stick?) and frantic pace of certain levels make this a short but enjoyable title.

Slightly more confusing was the Mega Drive version, which is a weird sort of point and click/RPG/adventure/platformer hybrid. GWAR are at the centre of the plot again, but this time Beavis and Butt-Head have already bought and lost their show tickets, and it's your job to help find them. This involves solving puzzles by working your way around town to find the appropriate items needed to progress. It's not always clear what you're meant to be looking for, which leads to some frustrating dead ends, and the platforming isn't quite as smooth as it could have been (or needed to be), but if you're a fan of the show and can cope with a few imperfections, then it's certainly worth looking this one up.

That's going to just about do it for this month. As usual, there's no real plan for next issue so do please give us a shout if you've got any ideas. Join us again next time to see what happens!

ROLL FOR DAMAGE

ED FORTUNE GUIDES YOU THROUGH THE REALM OF TABLETOP GAMING



One of the problems of hosting a games night is getting the right number of people to turn up. I don't like turning away anyone who makes their way to the Secret STARBURST Thunderdome to play games, but lots of players can restrict your options. Luckily, there are some excellent games out there that straddle the line between board game and party game that also happen to require a small crowd of players.

Cash 'n' Guns is a prime example. It's an eight player game that works best when it's you and seven chums who know each other quite well. The game is pretty simple; the premise is that you're a bunch of dodgy criminal types who have successfully pulled off a huge heist. You're just about to divvy up the cash when it all goes a bit *Reservoir Dogs*.

The rules are pretty straightforward. First, you need to decide if your gun is loaded. You only have three bullets, and there are eight rounds of gameplay, so you need to pick your moment. You stick a 'click' or a 'Bang' card face down. Then everybody points their guns at the same time. Don't worry, they're only foam rubber, yet somehow they still look menacing.

If a gun is pointed at you, then you have the chance to surrender. Of course, if you do that, you don't get any loot. If you don't surrender and the gun is loaded, then BANG! you're out for the round and you don't get any loot. Hold your nerve and if the gun just goes 'click', then your luck is in and you get to collect some loot (a pile of cards). Once all the loot is picked up, you go again until eight rounds are up. Whoever has the most loot wins, though you can also win if you're the last person standing. (This never happens.)

The loot itself is rather clever – one loot item is always the mob boss card, which allows you to command someone to point their gun at someone else. Then there are bullets and medpacs. You can only survive being shot three times before you're out of the game, so medpacs (which heal all wounds) are marvellous. There are also chase items – getting all the paintings almost certainly guarantees a win, but smaller art collections are worth much less.

As you may be able to tell, this is a very silly game. It takes no time at all for the players to start suddenly doing terrible Godfather impersonations, and it's surprising how vicious certain members of the family can turn out to be. There is a strategy of course, but this really isn't a game you should play solely to win; it's an excuse to mess around and do your favourite bit from that movie you love.

This is also encouraged with some neat standees – cartoon versions of popular crime movie clichés. There are also special ability cards that add a little bit of spice to the proceedings. These additional rules can tip the balance of the game slightly, but really they're just little rules tweaks that can be easily ignored.

The game is now in its second edition, and it's much improved from the first. For a start, the guns are now black with orange tips, rather than bright orange. They've also shifted the art style; first edition had messy characters that looked funny in a gritty sort of way. The second edition drafted in the omnipresent John Kovalic to produce very cartoony art that suits the 'family fun' feel much better.

They've also dropped the lightning fast 'Bang Bang Bang' card and the optional 'Cop in the Mafia' sub-game; both broke the flow of this fast and fun little game, and it's good that they're gone.

Add-ons to the old game included throwing stars, katana and the like; these aren't present in the new game though there's a limited edition rubber Uzi for those so inclined. They never added much to the old version in the past, and though we may see them again, I hope not; *Cash 'n' Guns* works much better when it's simpler.

In case you think this sounds a little like Western-style game *Bang!* - well, it plays in a similar way but the focus (and the fun) is different. We'll come back to *Bang!* some other day.

If you prefer your bluffing games without violence, then perhaps you should try *Sheriff of Nottingham*. As you may be able to surmise, this is a game with an old-timey feel. You take the role of a merchant, taking goods to market, as do your opponents. The aim of the game is to get the highest value items to market to make the most profit. First though, you have to get your goods past the beady eyes and greasy palms of the titular Sheriff. (Players take turns to play the role of the Sheriff, which is one of the things that make this fun.)

You draw cards, each one representing all sorts of interesting products. Green bordered cards are things like bread, cheese and chickens, and they're above board. Red bordered cards include pepper and weapons, and they're illegal (but high value). You pop the goods you're taking to market into a velvet envelope, and then pass them to the Sheriff. You have to declare how many goods you're taking to market, and what they are. You can't lie about the number of goods, but you're free to fib about what's in the envelope. You can also put a bribe on the envelope, to encourage the Sheriff to look the other way.

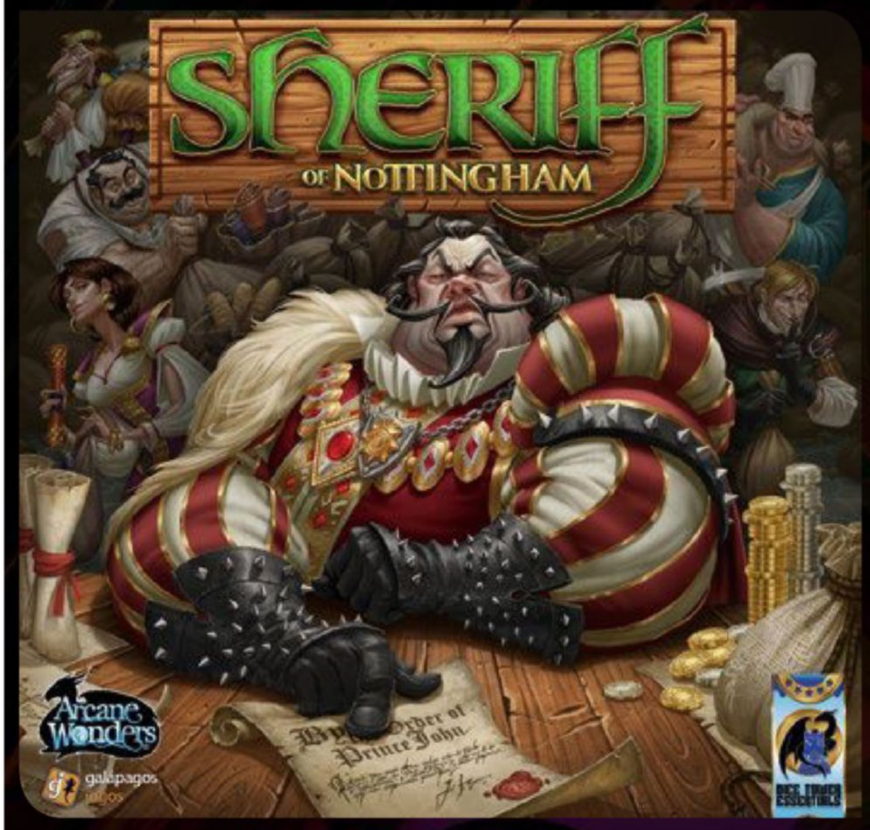
PHOTO: ANNE DAVIES

This is where it gets fun. If the Sheriff decides to 'see' you and opens the envelope, he can fine you if you've lied. If you're telling the truth though, he has to pay out instead. So you either want to deceive the law enough to bankrupt them or you want to get the most valuable items past customs. There are little extras of course. For example, illegal versions of regular goods are worth more; this means you can hand on heart say, "*you're only trading in bread*" and so on. The rulebook has a points value and frequency breakdown for card counters and other enemies of fun, but my advice is to leave the number crunching at home and play for laughs, rather than playing to win. Personally, the real winner is whoever gets away with the biggest lie.

It's currently the stand-out hit of the games scene; this is a bluffing and gambling card game that has all the fun of poker with none of the bankruptcies. It's all about the blatant lies and the clever cunning, and though it doesn't have the urgency of *Cash 'n' Guns*, it does allow for extended silliness. Flights of whimsy come easily in this game and who doesn't like to spin great big fibs and double bluffs?

Sheriff of Nottingham is actually a re-release of a game called Robin Hood, which had a convoluted backstory about a party and the Merry Men. This in itself was a re-issue of a Brazilian game called *Jogo da Fronteira*, which had little tin briefcases and was all about artefact smuggling. It also featured a sheriff (or strictly speaking, a xerife) but its more modern theme meant it was a little darker than it should have been. *Jogo da Fronteira* was itself a riff on the 1950's game *Contraband*, which was very popular in the UK and pretty much nowhere else.

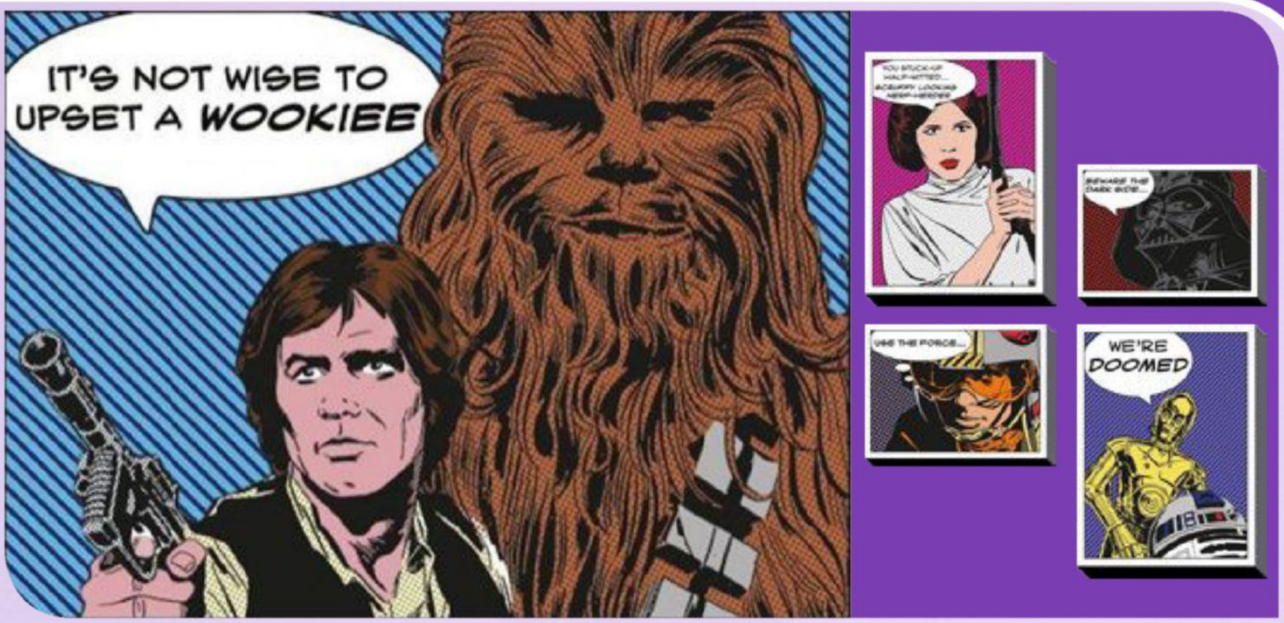
Sheriff of Nottingham came about because YouTube online games celebrity Tom Vasel really liked *Robin Hood* and wanted to see it re-released. This is about as big as a board game gets without appearing on *The Big Bang Theory*. I expect to see it become a huge hit over Christmas, and it's currently my 'go to' game when I'm asked for recommendations. The theme is fun yet inoffensive, the pieces are very nice indeed and though the clasps on the envelopes are a little fiddly, it's mostly a daft little game you can play with friends that you don't mind telling outrageous lies to. ✦



Ed Fortune can tweeted at **@ed_fortune** and contacted via **ed.fortune@starburstmagazine.com**

WATTO'S EMPORIUM

STUFF WE LIKED FROM AROUND THE WEB THIS MONTH WITH JACK BOTTOMLEY



WALL WARS

You might not have heard but the second trailer for that little sequel *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* was released last month and more recently, the world celebrated all things *Star Wars* on May 4th earlier this month (it may have started as a bad pun but we at STARBURST support any chance to bow our collective Stormtrooper helmets in honour of the iconic sci-fi series). In celebration of the latter occasion the merch masters over at **alltheheroes.co.uk,** released these impressive...most impressive comic strip styled 60 x 80cm Canvases. Each one centred on a popular quote and character(s) from the original trilogy; in the range you have C-3P0 and R2-D2, Han Solo and Chewbacca, Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader. No mind tricks are needed to force you trendy *Star Wars* lovers out there into this purchase.

STAR WARS "WE'RE DOOMED",
STAR WARS "IT'S NOT WISE TO UPSET A WOOKIE",
STAR WARS "USE THE FORCE",
STAR WARS "BEWARE THE DARKSIDE"

60 X 80 CANVAS' - £45.00

AVAILABLE FROM ALLTHEHEROES.CO.UK

GAMING GARMENTS

Should your thirst for vehicular mayhem, nostalgia and video games be lingering after our *Mad Max*-heavy last issue and due to *Fury Road* been in cinemas now, maybe you may want something more violent and chaotic. Sadly you won't get much violence with this awesomely designed t-shirt by J.C. Maziu, available from **Redbubble.com** but what you will get is the chance to see *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* by way of Nintendo's favourite coin collecting plumber, sounds chaotic to us! The shirt sees Mario don the leather jacket as Max, accompanied by his version of man's best friend in Yoshi the dinosaur (just in case you hadn't had enough of a dinosaur fix this issue), pursued by Lord Humungus (or Lord Wario in this case) and Bowser as Wez (spot on casting there). Something tells us this won't be coming to Nintendo consoles anytime soon (their loss), so to all the Max and Mario lovers out there, "you don't need another hero", Mad Mario is enough for any movie/gaming fan (and yes we realise that was a reference *Beyond Thunderdome* not *Road Warrior* but our pun-o-meter is approaching the need for a re-fuel, give us a brake! (oh, we're too much).

MAD M. T-SHIRT- £17.51
AVAILABLE FROM REDBUBBLE.COM

SOCK IT TO 'EM!

Speaking of retro gaming, who knew socks could be cool? Well the peeps over at **Numskull (numskull.co.uk)**, that's who. Socks may have been the token disappointing gift since Ryu did his first Hadoken. However not all socks are made equal and these particular pieces of Street Fighting sock wear are as impressive as pulling off Zangief's 360 degree pile-driver five times in a row. The pairs are split into three styles, rocking the colours of Ken, Ryu and Blanka (non of whom, ironically, wore socks) - so it's good to see they're keeping it old school. So next time you want to add a bit of comfort to your Shoryuken, grab a pair of these, your opponent may thank you for it!

STREET FIGHTER SOCKS - £9.99
AVAILABLE FROM NUMSKULL.CO.UK

NO STRINGS ATTACHED

If you have only just calmed down from the wall-to-wall action of *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (see our review on Page 80), then prepare to hyperventilate once again with this new Ultron Mark I figure from **Sideshow Collectables (sideshowtoy.com)**. If you look back at our Avengers centric issue 411, you'll see Sideshow's fully realised figure of the menacing Ultron on Pre-order but for our money, this crazily intricate creation is a more impressive feat. Designed to a tee from the film and multi-articulated, with LED displays in the eyes, mouth and chest (or arc reactor if we are being specific), this is as close as you can possibly get to owning your own version of the megalomaniacal AI, unless you go a step further, kidnap James Spader and force him to recite lines from the film daily (not that we are giving anyone ideas or anything). The figure will be shipping from May-July 2016 but on this evidence, it'll be worth the wait for Marvel movie maniacs. "I'm gonna show you something beautiful", too late Ultron, Sideshow already have.

ULTRON MARK I SIXTH SCALE FIGURE PRODUCED BY HOT TOYS
AVAILABLE FROM SIDESHOWTOY.COM
$249.99

YOU GOTTA CHARGE ME UP...

Now we don't know about you, but as avid gamers we can tell you one thing - there's always room for something that gets rid of cables. Now the PS4 is a wonderful beast, but boy, is running out of battery half way through a boss fight (*Bloodborne*, we're looking at you) because you couldn't be arsed fiddling with those micro USB connectors (lazy-arse gamers, we're looking at you...) frustrating.

Well fret no longer as all your prayers have been answered, thanks to the guys at **yellowbulldog.co.uk**, who are selling this rather nifty charging tower-cum-game storage unit. Storing up to ten PS4 games or Blu-rays and charging two controllers at once you really don't have an excuse not to be 'charging' in to battle [*I'm thinking where else I could store ten Blu-rays...* - Ed] - it even seperates if you don't fancy charging and storing in the same place. Though that just seems like unnecessary effort to be honest.

OFFICIAL PS4 GAMES TOWER + DUAL CHARGER - £29.99
AVAILABLE FROM YELLOWBULLDOG.CO.UK

STARBURST: EVENT PROFILE

WORDS & PHOTOS:TONY JONES

Saturday, April 4, 2015 and the best part of 1,200 science fiction fans are gathered in the Park Inn Hotel, Heathrow Airport for Dysprosium 2015, or Eastercon as it is called. When we arrived it seemed most were in the queue for breakfast – something that no doubt made those who lived near enough to commute grateful!

Wisely choosing not to compete with the shadow of last year's Loncon 03 (the Worldcon event held in London), this is an event in and of itself. Yes, there's still the familiar range of things to occupy time, but also something distinctive, taking advantage of the change of venue from previous Heathrow-based conventions.

Having thought about it, it is (in hindsight) obvious the hotel will shape the convention. As a for example, the Park Inn facilities were all on the ground floor, meaning easy access for wheelchair (and other) users. The hotel had dedicated conference facilities, and allowed these to spread out; the effect meant each area had a different *feel*. Being the main day, things felt busy yet not overflowing (at least during the day).

The biggest challenge was the lack of a large space for a dealers' room (there was an art room and a main programme room). The solution? Use a lot of meeting rooms along one corridor as a market. This means all the small press/T-shirt vendors/artists/jewellers could have a dedicated space they could shape. We felt there were lots of plusses with this, and some of the small press who had prepared were able to host their own mini-programme, lock the door when they wanted a break, and run until late evening. There were downsides: lower footfall, bigger publishers might feel a bit squeezed, the unprepared felt isolated. We are of the mind this was a good innovation – several dealers had mixed views and (on our small sample) it was 60/40 in favour of a large dealers' room. The optimum might be a bit of both.

Away from the dealers, there was plenty to enjoy. On arrival, the real ale bar was being re-stocked and there were plenty of places to take coffee. Registration was smooth and armed with a bag of freebies (mug, diary, book, flyers…), we took to the programme. As ever, much too much to do rather than sample; Jim Butcher seemed to be in panels or signings most of the day, Paul Cornell was too busy to do more than say 'Hi' and various future bids (including Helsinki and Dublin's Worldcon bids for 2017 and 2019) were represented. It was pleasing to speak to several newbies for whom this was their first convention (or second, including last year's London Worldcon). All very positive.

Later, as gossiping with various people (watch out for Tony Ballantyne's next book *Dream Paris*), we noticed Manchester had announced their bid for the 2016 Eastercon, and then spent an hour watching Daleks taking an obstacle course. Just another day at a convention!

26 JUNE – 5 JULY 2015
COMIC CON 4 & 5 JULY

GLASGOW COMIC CON

SCOTLAND'S COMIC BOOK FESTIVAL

CCA: CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART :: THE ART SCHOOL
GLASGOW PRINT STUDIO :: THE RENFIELD CENTRE

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- JIM STARLIN
(CREATOR OF THANOS)

"THE FANS IN SCOTLAND ARE AMAZING. I LOVE THIS EVENT"
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(WRITER SUICIDE SQUAD, RED SONJA)

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"THE NEW AGE OF SCOTTISH COMIC BOOKS IS HERE"
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- BIGCOMICPAGE.COM

"THE PREMIER COMIC EVENT IN SCOTLAND"
- THE LIST

"COMICS MATTER TO SCOTLAND"
- BBC NEWS

"IT WAS PURE AWESOME"
- SOME WEE GUY DRESSED AS DEADPOOL

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PAUL MOUNT'S TV ZONE

This month we're dazzled by DAREDEVIL, swashbuckled by OUTLANDER, tickled by INSIDE NO. 9 and bewitched by BETTER CALL SAUL...

Throw street parties! Hang out bunting (whatever that is)! Wispa Golds for all! Cats and dogs living together! Calm down, lowly mortals - abnormal service is resumed at TV Zone Towers and I'm safely installed back in front of The Idiot Box and ready to be hypnotised into submission by the very finest from TV's ferocious fantasy factories. My thanks to Sir Andrew of Pollard for keeping the lights on in my absence; sorry, Mr. P, I've changed the locks so you can't get back in (mwah hah). This column was beginning to look as if it was being written by someone who knew what he was talking about, not a (ahem)-something with far too many Dalek toys who remembers when the Tracy brothers had strings and not fully-functioning CGI limbs (but that's for next month).

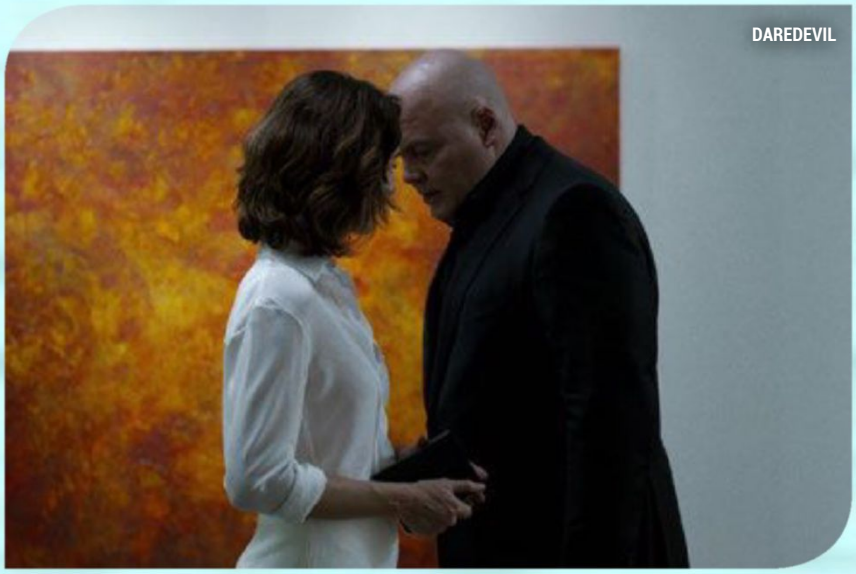
So what's new around here? Well, for one thing I bloody love **Daredevil**. Bloody love it. Now I'll readily admit to anyone who'll listen (and that's fewer people every week) that I have a love/hate relationship with modern superheroes. Actually, that's not quite right; it's more of a love/utterly indifferent relationship. Obviously, I'm a fan of the big, brash Marvel Cinematic Universe, and I admire the way it's all grown, developed and slotted together like a beautifully planned military movie exercise. I'm impressed by the fact that the MCU has made household names out of apparent second-rankers like Thor, Iron Man and Captain America and finally made a decent fist of a big-screen Hulk. But elsewhere in comic strip world I'm bored by Batman and stupefied by Superman (imagine a film with both of 'em... blimey, how dull would *that* be??) and try as I might – and I really have tried – I just can't quite feel the love for *Arrow* and *The Flash* (sorry again, Mr. P), although I accept that they've given the DC Universe a shiver of respectability in the face of the clumsy handling of its properties on the big screen. But by the power of Greyskull, I bloody love **Daredevil**!

The Man Without Fear has rocked up in one big thirteen-episode lump on Netflix, the first of their planned five 'original series' depicting the exploits of a group of so-called 'street level' Marvel superheroes who will eventually come together in a big jamboree series called **The Defenders**. But **Daredevil** is first off the blocks to pave the way and suddenly Marvel's TV Division, still on shaky ground with **Agents of** (zzzz) **S.H.I.E.L.D.** and the indifferently-received **Agent Carter** (what next, a series about Tony Stark's metal polish supplier?), has hit pay dirt.

What's most extraordinary about **Daredevil** - and there's really a lot of extraordinary going on here - is the fact that it fits seamlessly into the already well-established Marvel Universe (TV and film) whilst being quite unlike anything and everything we've seen before in either medium. We've watched as Marvel's movie plan has come to incredible fruition building and developing individual characters before bringing them together in the ultimate super-team and we've seen Marvel fly off into the realms of pure space opera in **Guardians of the Galaxy**. But it's all been larger-than-life, comic strips ripped off the page and flung into the multiplex with enormous brio (and budgets) and whilst it's all been huge fun and splendid fantasy entertainment, it's rarely been particularly realistic. But then it was never supposed to be. **Daredevil** hits the bullseye (geddit?) because it's so real, and so grounded it's almost hyper-realistic. **Daredevil** tells us what it would be really like if we had incredible abilities - in case you've not been watching (shame on you), Matt Murdock/Daredevil has heightened senses and super-agility - and has decided to take the law into his own hands by slipping on a mask and black pants and becoming a ruthless vigilante. If superheroes existed they'd be just like Daredevil. Despite the odd subtle reference to the expanded Marvel Universe, **Daredevil** seems to exist in a different reality and yet somehow it still seems to belong to established Marvel canon, Daredevil operating out of the rundown, shabby Hell's Kitchen area of New York rather than in amongst the more multiplex friendly skyscrapers, penthouses and super-powered aircraft carriers of the likes of Iron Man and The Avengers.

Daredevil isn't a series about bad guys and good guys; heroes and villains. There's no black or white here, only shades of grey. And whilst Daredevil is clearly on the side of the angels there's something edgy and discomfiting about him, a suspicion that he's only one brutal punch-up away from becoming the sort of psychopath he's ostensibly pledged to fight. Thirteen episodes (you binge-watch if you want, I'm taking my time because this is just too good to devour in a rush) gives the show a luxury the MCU movies don't have. **Daredevil** can really focus on character rather than

DAREDEVIL



DAREDEVIL

popcorn-crowd pleasing spectacle and Matt Murdock (Charlie Cox) and his nemesis Wilson Fisk (Vincent D'Onofrio) are very much front and centre here, with Matt's likable chums Foggy Nelson (Elden Henson) and Karen Page (Deborah Ann Woll - no longer bleeding from the eyes, *True Blood* style) providing moral support and the occasional bit of light relief into what's quite a grim and bleak worldview.

Daredevil, in its first year at least (and there's rarely been a quicker recommission, such was the enthusiasm of its reception) is about what makes people what they are, specifically Matt Murdock, blinded in his youth in a road traffic accident and brought up in near-poverty by his father, a boxer murdered after failing to throw a fight when instructed by hoodlums. Fisk, meanwhile, endures a childhood of abuse and torment from his vicious father whom he eventually bludgeons to death during an assault upon his terrified mother. Together they dismember the body and dispose of it in the river. Matt emerges the better man from his difficult childhood - although blinded, he qualifies as a lawyer and sets up an ambitious, if bargain-basement, legal practice with his best friend and uses his remarkable abilities to operate as a black-clad, baton-wielding vigilante. Fisk's path is darker, and he becomes a brutal and ruthless crime lord, yet his past plagues him and he's often uncomfortable with the things he's done and the things he has to do. "*I've done things that I'm not proud of*," he says at one point. "*I've hurt people and I'm going to hurt more*". Fisk is urbane, softly-spoken and, superficially at least, as determined to clean up the streets as the black-masked vigilante but in entirely different ways. Murdock and Fisk are flipsides of the same coin and the series lovingly, majestically dismantles them both in an attempt to find out what makes them tick and why.

This isn't just a great superhero TV series - in many ways it's not *even* a superhero TV series - but it's also a brilliant, audacious and intelligent piece of modern television drama. It's tough and uncompromising; fight scenes are bone-crunchingly realistic and the show not only never shies away from the grubby reality of life in the underbelly of one of the New York's less salubrious suburbs, it almost revels in it. The language is ripe and adult, far removed from the family-friendly light cussin' of some of the broader appeal MCU movies, and the violence is occasionally stomach-troublingly graphic and worlds away from what would be considered acceptable in a Network show or even on the big screen. The cast are pretty faultless too, with the swarthy Cox spot-on as the tormented Murdock and his athletic alter ego and D'Onofrio delivering a tour-de-force performance as Fisk (better known in the comic world as Kingpin, of course). Both men have their own special confidantes too; Matt befriends a nurse, Claire Temple (Rosario Dawson), when she finds him, as the vigilante, injured and sprawling in a dumpster in an alleyway after a particularly heavy beating, and Fisk falls for the charms of art gallery employee Vanessa Marianna (Ayelet Zurer). *The bad guy gets a girlfriend, what's that all about?*

By the end of the season, certain storylines have run their course, justice appears to be done and - look away now, spoiler ahoy! - Daredevil finally resembles the character fans will properly recognise from the comics. As a series, **Daredevil** has been an absolute revelation, demonstrating that it's possible to make a superhero show that is not only thrilling and exiting, but also relevant to the modern world and relatable to it in a way that, with the best will in the world, Thor, Iron Man and Co. can never be. Marvel's partnership with Netflix has got off to a spectacular start and I'm genuinely excited to see what's in store not only in Season Two of **Daredevil,** but also the **A.K.A. Jessica Jones** (she's a new one on me), **Iron Fist**, **Luke Cage** and **The Defenders** series yet to come.

OUTLANDER

Hey, there's a new series of **Outlander** streaming on Amazon Prime! Brilliant, I love all that stuff. *There can be only one,* fiery decapitations, dodgy Scottish accents... hope we get to see more of planet Zeitgeist. Wait, what's that? Oh. Oh, it's not **Highlander**, it's **Outlander**. Got my *Outs* and *High*s mixed-up there. Again. This is what happens when you have a couple of months off...

Never mind though. **Outlander**'s not a bad substitute for the further exploits of Connor MacWhatsit and his clashing Claymore although it's actually a very different beast indeed. Based on a long-running series of doorstep novels by Diana Gabaldon (although, in fact they're not so much doorstep novels, more the entire door and half the house) **Outlander** is a romantic time-travel adventure in which World War II Nurse Claire Beauchamp Randall (Caitriona Balfe) finds herself back in 18th century Scotland during a post-war Highland holiday with her returned-from-the-conflict husband. Now I've just about come to terms with the fact that I'm probably never going to travel back in time to 18th century Scotland but **Outlander** is such an incredible production - it's almost photo-realistic - that an hour in its company honestly makes me feel as if I've stepped back into another time; albeit

OUTLANDER

a rather muddy, grubby and probably very smelly one. Serious bucks have been spent on **Outlander**, which has feature film production values with its lavish sets, fully-costumed cast of hundreds and stunning location filming in and around the Scottish Highlands themselves.

Worthy stuff, beautifully realised… but with a tendency to be a little… well, dull. **Outlander** sometimes seems so pleased with itself and its naked authenticity (and there's a lot of naked going on around here) that its story dawdles when it really ought to be picking up a head of steam. Whole episodes seem to roll by with people sitting about in draughty castles or banqueting halls talking to one another and Claire's desire to find a way back to her own time (she fell asleep by some standing stones near Inverness in the 1940s and awoke to find herself two hundred years in the past… as you do) comes and goes depending on whose good books she's in - sometimes she's a 'guest' of lairy, lusty Highlanders, sometimes she's in the company of the Redcoat Dragoons who've come to bring civilisation to the Scottish wilderness. Claire's medical knowledge makes her an invaluable asset to either side and, of course, she quickly catches the eye of many a bawdy male admirer, not least young Highlander Jamie Fraser (Sam Heughan) whose dislocated arm she fixes in the first episode. Caught in the middle of these two fighting factions, it's not too long before Claire starts to forget about her old life as she becomes accustomed to living and loving in the 18th century.

A feast for the eyes, **Outlander** (quick fact: the original book series was created by Gabaldon when she became fascinated by the character of Jamie McCrimmon, played by Frazer Hines, in '60s episodes of **Doctor Who** - Jamie Fraser is named after both character and actor and Hines crops up in the latter half of the series as a jail warden) is never less than watchable but could do with a bit more incident and action and a decent sense of jeopardy and some higher stakes wouldn't go amiss here and there. With its romantic storylines clearly powering its narrative, **Outlander** is probably one for the ladies (and why not, genre TV needn't all be two-fisted hunks in costumes slugging it out week after week?) but the show looks sensational and there's just about enough going on to appeal to those of a less kissy-kissy disposition who just fancy wallowing in some light time-travel shenanigans.

BETTER CALL SAUL

AND FINALLY…

Just time (and space) for a special mention for the second series of BBC Two's anthology comedy series **Inside No. 9**, created and written by former **League of Gentlemen**… err… gentlemen Reece ("*I'm in everything!*") Shearsmith and Steve ("*I was in **Benidorm**… oh, never mind*") Pemberton. The first series, screened last year, was a quiet but underappreciated triumph and one episode in particular - a virtually silent knockabout in which two inept burglars singularly fail to successfully break into a luxury house to steal a valuable painting - was a modern comic masterpiece. Series 2 has really knocked it out of the park and the series - every episode is set in some property associated with the number '9' - has found a much more enthusiastic audience this time.

INSIDE NO. 9

These six episodes have been much bolder and more confident, mixing black humour, slapstick and the macabre to create a collection of dark, sometimes disturbing tales of murder, duplicity, death and downright weirdness. Sometimes the denouements are a bit too obvious - **Witchfinder General** homage *The Trial of Elizabeth Gadge* was a bit of a disappointment - but *The 12 Days of Christine* (starring the ubiquitous Sheridan Smith) was brilliantly inventive and the Support Call centre-set *Cold Comfort* was genuinely quite shocking. Quality comedy at a time when **Mrs Brown's Boys** reigns supreme.

Kudos too for the magnificent **Better Call Saul**, the **Breaking Bad** prequel series (another Netflix-only show in the UK) which has been giving me sleepless nights ever since it was announced. **Breaking Bad** was pretty much the perfect modern TV series and it never really dropped the ball throughout its five taut seasons. I was concerned that a return to that world - even without Walter White and Jesse Pinkman et al. - could sully the name of the parent show if it floundered. I should have known better and trusted master TV craftsman Vince Gilligan. Across its ten episodes, **Better Call Saul** beautifully filled in the background of **BB**'s sleazy comic relief shyster lawyer Saul Goodman (magnificently and sometimes poignantly played by Bob Odenkirk), expertly chronicling his failed attempts to become a legitimate lawyer in the years before Walter White turned his life upside down. Nothing ever goes right for Jimmy McGill (his pre-Saul identity), despite his best efforts and by the end of the series we see him finally deciding to put himself before everyone else as he sets out on the road the becoming the character we grew to love in **Breaking Bad**. Far from taking the shine from the memory of its parent show, **Better Call Saul** is a witty and classy companion piece which has the potential, as it develops further, to perhaps surpass the show that spawned it. Hmmm… maybe I've been taking too much crystal meth…

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it's only a movie

a column by JORDAN ROYCE

To quote the mighty Dr Frank N. Furter, "It's not easy having a good time". I had only been in the States for three days and already I had survived an American emergency room, did a 'Roger Moore' and passed out due to g-forces while flying a fighter plane over the desert, and had to outrun a sandstorm whilst heading back to Las Vegas in a muscle car (This was supposed to be a 'break'!). Then on the afternoon of April 16th, 2015, I had to face the ultimate challenge so far. The new trailer for **Star Wars: The Force Awakens** was released and we were deep in the desert heading out on the infamous Nevada Highway 375, better known as *The Extraterrestrial Highway* – with no signal! It seemed bleak, but in my never-ending quest to visit geek meccas, and weird locales, we were heading to a gaff that I had always wanted to visit. Could it be that the world famous A 'Le' Inn in Rachel, Nevada would have Wi-Fi?

The A 'LE' INN, RACHEL, NEVADA, USA

If you love **The X-Files** or **The Invaders**, a visit to Rachel is a must at some point. Named after the first baby born in the valley, Rachel Jones, and home to only 50 inhabitants, Rachel is just the sort of place that David Vincent would encounter on a weekly basis. The **A 'Le' Inn** itself is blissfully unaware of its cultural status as almost the visitor centre for Area 51. It is home to the famous Alien Burger, a delight that you can have with or without secretion (that's cheese to us earthlings). The gaff itself is awesomely authentic, even down to the locals sat at the bar. It's chock full of gaudy alien merch, and the walls adorned with out of date memorabilia. There is even an original Pac Man arcade cabinet sitting in quiet retirement in the corner. Happily for me it had Wi-Fi, and my female companions freaked out when they realised that it also had a geocache. They excitedly retrieved a bendy green alien key ring and left in its place a pack of incense matches.

If the surreality of geocaching in the **A 'Le' Inn** was not enough, it was time for my first butchers at the **Star Wars: The Force Awakens** trailer. Now I am aware that you lot have taken time out from masturbating over your Return of the Jedi bikini shots to gush orgasmically over this trailer. What did *I* think? Well for starters, it's not a proper bloody trailer, it's just another teaser trailer, and sorry it just left me a tad disappointed. Crashed Star Destroyer, creepy Luke voice, melted Vader helmet, more X-wings, a few new Storm Troopers. Ok, what else is there? BB-8. Mmmm, he's already starting to piss me off. A sweaty Boyega (great name for a Thai dish), and then a growl and Han says he's home. This is what caused an Internet meltdown? Remembering when trailers had bits of the movie in them, I just walked sadly outside and watched the sunset like Luke did on Tatooine...

Thankfully, I survived the rest of the week, and managed to return to the UK in time for the week-early release of **Avengers: Age of Ultron**. Now I have always appreciated sequels that just, well, start. Like **Lethal Weapon 2**, **AAOU** begins with our eponymous heroes in the middle of some heroey stuff. Here we find them about to storm Baron von Strucker's castle (not a sexual euphemism!). Although, given the comic book importance of von Strucker, it was disappointing to see him portrayed almost as a comic relief henchman. Moving swiftly on, we find Tony Stark wanting to create a global defence system, and he talks angry Banner into helping him create Ultron (played in a camp manner by the pixelated scenery-chewing James Spader). Now, Ultron quickly brings himself up to speed with humanity and has a problem with us being a bunch of warmongering bellends - so he starts a war...

Now I have heard a fair bit of moaning about this flick, and criticism about it being overly complex, and lacking in both story and characterisation. I can agree to an extent, but I really do think that **AAOU** is a pretty damn good follow-up to the 2012 behemoth. The problem does not come from the structure or execution of this movie, but rather is a symptom of the **MCU** doing its job a little too well. It set out to reproduce on screen an entire comic book universe with interacting plots and characters. If you look at the comic book source material, as the crossovers, characters and plots progress, it gets messy, and much less accessible for the casual reader. Occasionally even prompting titles to create 'jump on' points, where new storylines begin almost from scratch. Sporadically, even entire universes have been rebooted to streamline continuity, like the myriad DC '**Crisis**' series, or the upcoming Marvel **Secret Wars** mini-series. It is now getting to the point where the movies are beginning to encounter these same constraints. It is important at this point to remember that **AAOU** is a sequel to both the original Avengers movie and the superb **Captain America: The Winter Soldier**. I know someone who loved the original, but isn't a Captain America fan. Suffice to say, he enjoyed this new entry but was confused about some of the new characters in this follow up. We are now entering the era where the previous movies are becoming back issues that we have to catch up on!

If you can ignore the fact that Stark becoming a threat to global stabilisation is swept under the carpet (Actually "Watch The Avengers Clean Up Their Own Shit" would be an honest tagline!), then there are a lot of gems contained within Whedon's swansong. As a standalone movie, **AAOU** is undeniably flawed. As a pivotal chapter in the ongoing Marvel cinematic saga, it's a superb addition, and importantly, it's fun.

Jordan Royce can be contacted at
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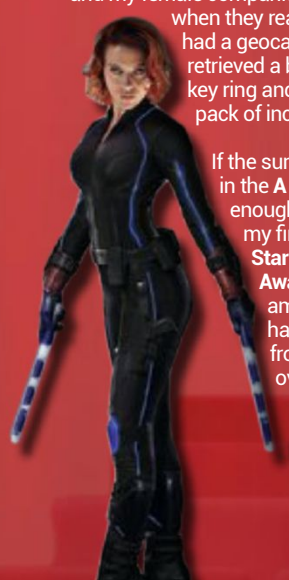
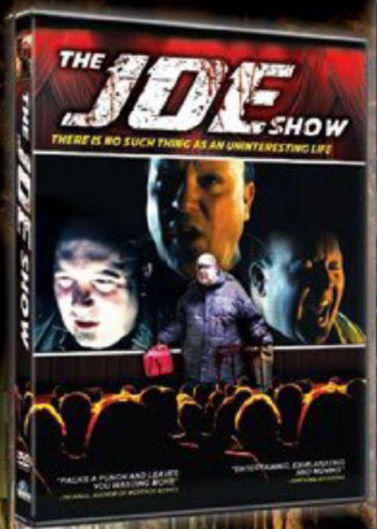
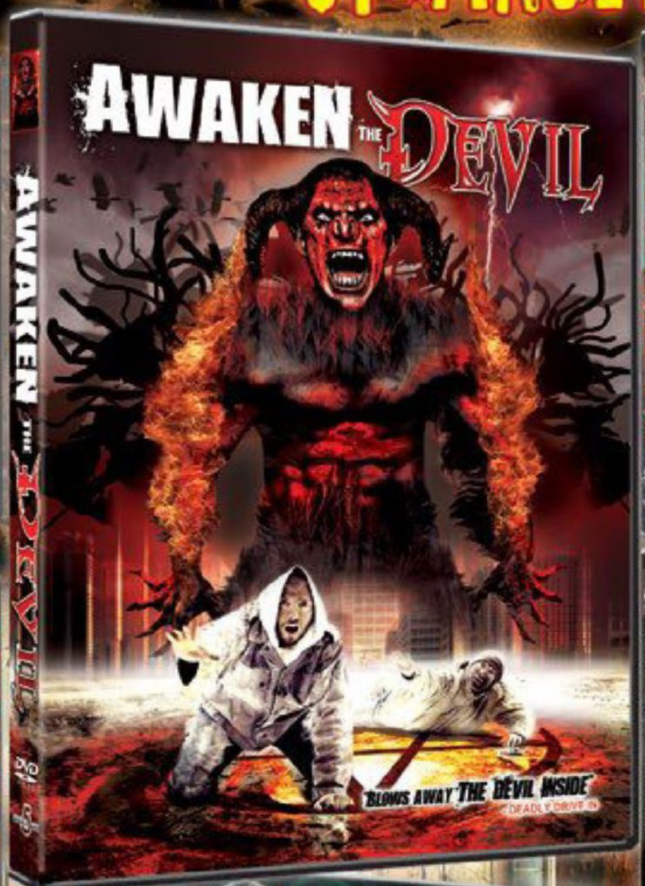
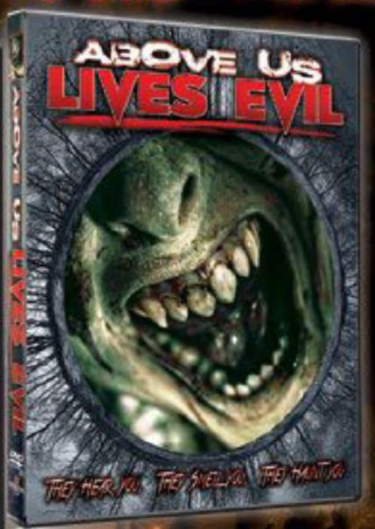


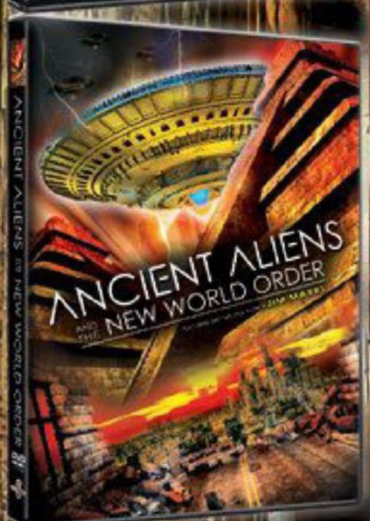
The Black Widow is back with her fantastic pair of sticks!

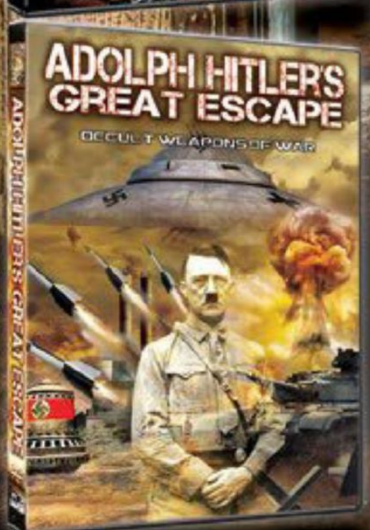
ENTER A DOMAIN WHERE STRANGE IS NORMAL

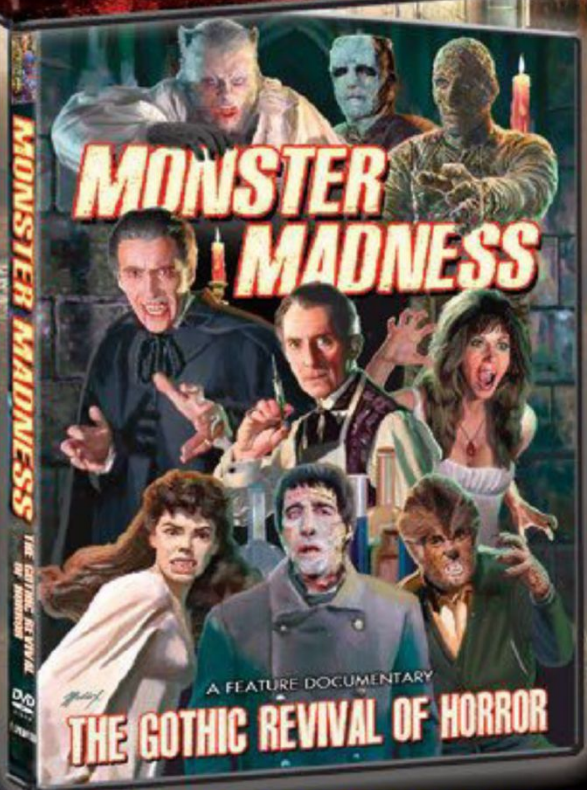


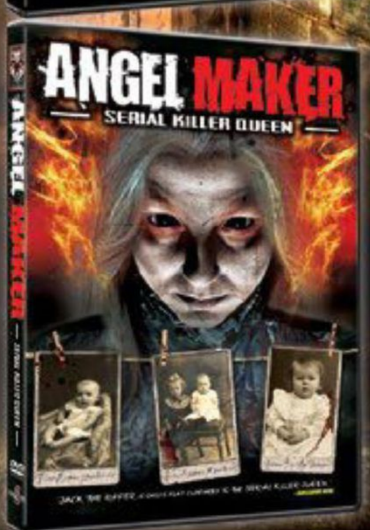












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